

WALTER PATER

SELECTED WORKS

Edited by
RICHARD ALDINGTON
with an Introduction



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INTRODUCTION

BY RICHARD ALDINGTON

USE of the word "Victorian" to describe the period 1837-1900 is convenient but misleading—an emotional label is attached to what should be only a date. Everyone has a general if inaccurate idea of what he means by "Victorian", above all whether he uses the word disparagingly or otherwise. When Lytton Strachey called his book *Eminent Victorians* he did not mean to imply admiration; but to-day, after a second and most disastrous war, most of us are likely to look back upon the "Victorian" age nostalgically, as a golden epoch of wealth, power and tranquillity. In any event it is misleading to apply the adjective to men who expended their energy in criticising their age or who, as is the case with Pater, turned their backs on it and tried to create a more sympathetic environment in the imagination. The whole of Pater's life was passed in the Queen's reign, yet he was never once summoned to Court, as the most fastidious æsthete of the time, to give his opinion on any matter connected with art or literature. Indeed it is a question, worthy the attention of some future Sir Thomas Browne: whether Queen Victoria had ever heard of Walter Pater?

Yet in appearance at least Pater was a product of his age. Over the signature of an Oxford undergraduate there exists a caricature which in its undistinguished way tells the more depressing truths about Pater's physical appearance. Here is "Marius the Epicurean" (the drawing's caption) in top hat, high stiff collar, starched cuffs, patent leather boots, morning coat and striped trousers. This, you would instantly say, must be Podsnap junior on his way to the City, or, at best, some debilitated cavalry officer in mufti. But no! this heavily moustached figure, the embodiment apparently of bourgeois philistinism, was that mysterious Brasenose don who dwelt in æsthetic surroundings, the Epicurean whose mental life was seemingly a series of delightful "escapes" from drab reality among sensations and ideas the least amenable to "Victorian" morals and manners.

On the face of it this looks a promising topic for a biographer—the ugly duckling of King's School, Canterbury, who turned out to be Brasenose's swan though not Leda's; or, better still, the Trojan cart-horse who smuggled Franco-German æstheticism into High Church Oxford. But, as a matter of fact, the hope is delusive, for

Pater was never in any danger of connecting himself with a life drama. He was far too fastidious and timid ever to enter on a course of action which would involve the risk of a melodramatic crash, such as befell his most notorious disciple, Oscar Wilde. In accordance with the precept of his master, Epicurus, Pater "hid his life", but on the whole he is a mystery man without a mystery. If, as Wright claims, Pater went about "in a kind of disguise" there was nothing dangerous hidden behind it. The rulers of Oxford seem to have decided that he was undesirable but comparatively harmless, and the most he had to endure was the negative persecution of frustration and such nagging caricature as is likely to befall anyone who specialises in a subject so unpopular as æsthetics.

In the absence of any collection of Pater's letters or of any reminiscences of his early life which seem accurate and trustworthy, writers have naturally been tempted to look for biographical hints in his own works. Thus *The Child in the House*, *Emerald Uthwart*, *Marius the Epicurean* and *Gaston de Latour* are all thought to contain Pater's recollections of his childhood and youth. Taken literally, the impression derived from these scattered hints would imply an imposing background of impoverished aristocrats living in old manor houses. Unfortunately for the illusion, there have been published photographs of the houses in which Pater's early life was spent, and they all turn out to be small drab suburban villas.

But for the fact that his grandfather re-emigrated to England in indignation over the war of 1812, Pater would have been born an American; and as a matter of plain fact at the time of Walter's birth (August 4th, 1839) his father was one of two brothers practising as surgeons in the Commercial Road, Stepney. The child was only five when his father died, and the impoverished widow and children moved to a small house at Enfield, where the boy was brought up by women, among whom his grandmother is thought to have come first in his affection, on the strength of this remark in *Gaston*:

"... the old grandmother died, to the undissembled sorrow of Gaston, bereft unexpectedly it seemed of the gentle creature, to whom he had always turned for an affection that had been as no other, in its absolute incapacity of offence."

What a curious person Pater was! Did he suppose that a child's grief could be either pretended or dissembled, and that the chief charm of a grandmother lies in the fact that she is not offensive?

February by a coincidence was often the month which produced such events as there are in Pater's life. It was in February 1853 that

he entered King's School, Canterbury, and appears to have suffered from the rough and tumble of Public School life in those days. Two reminiscing school-fellows report that Pater always evaded snow fights, and hid miserably shivering on a stone stairway. Apparently this did not preserve him from violence resulting in serious injury, if we may believe a story told by Wright with circumstantial accuracy:

"In the autumn of this year (*i.e.* 1856) there occurred to Pater a serious misfortune. As we have seen, he had never been popular at school, and one day, for a reason not known—perhaps for no particular reason—a number of boys set upon him near the Norman Staircase; and in the midst of the scuffle a ruffianly boy, whose name may be omitted, gave Pater a dreadful kick, with the result that he had at once to be conveyed home, where he lay ill for many weeks. Mr. Wallace (*i.e.* *the headmaster*) having been informed of the name of the offender, not only took the matter up, but expressed his determination to expel him (*i.e.* *the ruffianly boy*) from the school. From Pater, however, on his sick bed came an earnest request that the boy might be forgiven, and the affair passed over. This magnanimity affected Mr. Wallace even to tears, and as late as two years after, when bidding Pater farewell, he told him that he had not forgotten 'that beautiful act of Christian Charity'; while Pater's magnanimity became one of the prized traditions of the school. From the results of this lamentable occurrence, however, he never, it has been assumed, really recovered, and the peculiarity of his gait which marked him all the rest of his life is attributable to it."

If this story is true (and though it comes from Wright it sounds authentic) then it explains a good deal about Pater which seems odd and even a little repulsive. At the time of this misfortune he was an abnormally sensitive boy of sixteen, with that feeling of insecurity so often found in orphans. He was moreover in a vulnerable phase of his life, for he had recently discovered that he could write, and in the first fine careless rapture was pouring out poems, essays and stories almost daily. (That he was incautiously showing and reading these things to other boys would explain the attack, nothing being so infuriating to the young barbarian as artistic talent). Wright evidently thought that permanent physical injury of a particularly unfortunate kind resulted. But the psychological damage must have been even worse. Doubtless it did not cause but it must have fortified his unhappy and even furtive timidity (so excessive that Pater could never look another man in the eye), his aloofness, his inability to give himself unreservedly, and even that nostalgic longing to escape into an ideal world.

If Canterbury accidentally did Pater this injury, Canterbury provided him with an opportunity to live the only kind of life in which serenity was possible for him. In 1858 he won a scholarship of sixty pounds a year tenable for three years at Queen's College, Oxford; to which his school added a gift of thirty pounds to buy books. The suggestion has been made that the influence of Oxford on Pater was unfavourable, and that he would have been better served by "going through the mill of Fleet Street". Now, it is true that at Oxford Pater met with a good deal of opposition and even unfriendliness, as the expression of his genius developed and showed its fundamental hostility to the conventional Church life of the place, but Fleet Street would have been far worse; it would have done to his mind what Canterbury brutality did to his body and psyche. Undoubtedly Fleet Street would have cured him of his preciosity, his dilatory and over-scrupulous method of writing, his pleasure in scholarship, his dilettantism; but in curing him it would have destroyed him. You could not make that silk purse into a sow's ear, Walter Pater into George Augustus Sala. Oxford was the only possible haven.

Pater still had before him six or seven years of poverty and uncertainty about a career when he went up to Oxford as a freshman in October, 1858. He was also struggling with a crisis in religious faith, which was a common enough experience in those days and left its mark on many who broke away from orthodoxy. Many English writers of the time were essentially lay preachers, *curés manqués*, bishops who missed the ecclesiastical bus. Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Huxley, Tyndall—they all preached. And if Pater wrote with such extreme care, such attention to maintaining the tone of a decent urbanity, it was largely because he was determined not to preach, not to exhort, not to condemn, not to proselytise, not to force unasked advice on the nation. While Pater was at Canterbury he had been noted (we are informed) for religious fervour, but may not his masters and pastors have been mistaken in the quality of this devotion? Doubtless this piety existed, but it was æsthetic rather than spiritual, appreciative certainly, but fundamentally lacking in conviction. Whatever his subsequent hesitations and compunctions and turnings back, Pater could never have been a Christian such as, in their various ways, were Newman and Stanley, Arnold and Jowett.

In connection with Pater's religious views while at Canterbury, it is tempting to quote the passage from *Gaston de Latour* about Gaston and his friends as they "served" the bishop at mass, where Pater describes them as "zealous, ubiquitous, more prominent than ever, though for the most part profoundly irreverent" and notes their "disdain of the untensured laity". Whether intended or not the whole

passage (in Chapter II of *Gaston*) could pass as a description of the Canterbury King's Scholars during service, even down to the touch of snobbery at the end. And the phrase "profoundly irreverent" may remind us that at this very period of supposed religious fervour the youthful Pater was delighting in the works of Voltaire. Then, turning over the pages of *Marius the Epicurean* we light upon the passage where Marius reads the works of "that Voltaire of antiquity", Lucian of Samosata:

"... writings seeming to overflow with that intellectual light turned upon dim places, which, at least in seasons of fair mental weather, can make people laugh where they have been wont, perhaps, to pray."

It must be remembered that Oxford was, among other things, a seminary for the higher clergy, and even such unlikely persons as Morris and Burne-Jones originally went up with the intention of taking holy orders. Pater's two school friends, who matriculated about the same time, both became clergymen, and it seemed the obvious career for a poor clever youth who had won a scholarship. But these very school friends, who must have been most nearly acquainted with Pater's real views, were scandalised when he said he intended to take holy orders. Both declared that they would protest to the bishop, and one instantly cut Pater.

Pater did not suffer without regret this separation from an ancient creed which had lost its meaning, and a close friend who turned out to be a bigot. His mood was one of wistful uncertainty, of the mind at unwilling war with cherished feelings. Yet with Voltaire to banter him out of the old ways and Goethe to console him with love of art, serenity, curiosity, Pater had not much to regret. He always sympathised instinctively with men who had lived at epochs of great mental change—the age of the Antonines, the Renaissance. Remembering these early troubles and self-questionings we can see how easily he could in their case follow his favourite practice of identifying himself with the mind about which he was writing.

On the material side, this repudiation by his friends brought complications and anxieties, for if he did not take holy orders, how was Pater to live? Outwardly, he lived calmly, forming new friendships and travelling on the Continent, particularly in Germany, then the country of his admiration. He was also lucky enough to attract the attention of Jowett who, as Professor of Greek, offered to give extra lectures in Greek free of charge to any of the men sufficiently interested to attend. No fewer than three attended, and Pater was one of them.

Now, whatever success Jowett achieved as an unorthodox churchman, a teacher of Greek and trainer of future pro-consuls, and a sort of concealed dictator of the University, he was not inspired as a guide of perplexed and sensitive intellectuals. He greatly disliked the æsthetic movement, and did all he could to discourage young men from it. Thus, for a whole year, he tormented young Addington Symonds by forcing him to give up the work he really liked in order to translate a heavy German metaphysician. And it was probably Jowett's influence which directed young Pater's reading away from pure literature to metaphysics, with the result that he took only second-class honours.

This comparative failure naturally brought up in a very acute form the question what the new graduate was to do for a living? In view of the evidence as to Pater's real views, it is certainly a little startling to find that with a Renaissance light-heartedness he applied for ordination to the Bishop of London. Apparently the application would have succeeded, and Pater would have spent his life as a country parson, a kind of æsthetic Naaman in the house of a philistine Rimmon, but for the two school friends already mentioned. At the first hint of the news they instantly began a feverish correspondence of protest with the Bishop, and induced others to do likewise. The application was refused, and Pater's "friend" McQueen, a wealthy young man, who led this opposition, virtuously retired and bought himself an estate, leaving Pater to face the awkward problem of earning bread and butter and a roof.

At this crisis, another misfortune occurred. The aunt who had looked after the Pater children since the death of their parents and grandmother, herself died suddenly in Dresden; and thus at twenty-two Pater found himself alone and poor, without a profession, and with two dependent sisters. Unfortunately we have practically no information covering the important period, December 1862 to February 1864. Had Pater been left any private means? What provision had been made for his sisters? How did he dispose of the girls during that time? What plans, if any, did he make for his own career? All we are told is that "for a couple of years he lived in lodgings in High Street, and took pupils". Cramping the stupid and the lazy must have been a come-down for one trying to live up to Goethe's lofty standards of self-culture. But in the end all was well—on the 5th February, 1864, Pater was elected a probationary Fellow of Brasenose, an appointment made permanent a year later. Perhaps Jowett's secret influence was behind this, but all we are told is that Pater owed this essential step in his fortunes to "his knowledge of Hegel".

Once inside this snug haven Pater was extremely careful to take

every precaution against being intrigued out of it, as he had been intrigued out of taking holy orders. Apparently there were no love affairs in Pater's life; or, if there were, they were conducted with such supernatural discretion (whether male or female) that they never got into print or even into traditional gossip. The only real danger of deprivation he ever ran was when he published one of the most civilised books which appeared in England in his lifetime. At all events, by 1869 Pater felt sufficiently secure to bring his sisters to a house in Bradmore Road, Oxford. Even before that his life had settled into a routine which lasted with little change until 1880. Until 1880 he was Tutor of his College, and in any case was always in Oxford during term. During vacations he travelled on the Continent with his sisters or with some University friend, such as Shadwell (the future Provost of Oriel) or A. H. Sayce, the orientalist. Germany was now replaced by Italy and France. All of which gives a somewhat ironic point to Pater's famous dictum that "failure is to form habits".

In 1860 Pater destroyed his early writings, and such fragments as have survived in Wright's biography do not give us the slightest reason to regret the sacrifice. For some years afterwards Pater apparently wrote little or nothing, but began again as soon as he had achieved the security and periods of leisure given by his fellowship. "Diapheneité", his first acknowledged piece, was written in July 1864, and his first publication was the essay on Coleridge which appeared in the *Westminster Review* for January 1866. This was followed by "Winckelmann" (*Westminster Review*, January 1867); "Notes on Leonardo da Vinci" (*Fortnightly Review*, November 1869); and "Sandro Botticelli" (*Fortnightly Review*, August 1870). The study of William Morris called "Æsthetic Poetry", though written in 1868, was not published until 1889, and for some reason withdrawn from later editions of *Appreciations*. Not until February 1873 did Pater collect some of his essays into a small book, rather unwisely entitled *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. The title given to later editions, *The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry*, is much more accurate, and if used at first might have protected Pater from some of the hostile criticism he had to endure.

Carefully and slowly as Pater had proceeded, cautiously as he had phrased his views, this book was instantly assailed with that hostility which greets all who run counter to accepted prejudices, particularly those few who in an English-speaking country are bold enough to claim an importance for the arts and the intellectual life above mere pastime and idling. The book's title was particularly unfortunate, for Pater's purpose was not to relate history but to present a series of imaginative reconstructions of Renaissance personalities. The book

throughout repudiated the abstract metaphysical approach to art of the Hegelians and the ethical views of Ruskin; while the "Conclusion" is an eloquent if (in view of Pater's position) indiscreet statement of the author's "Cyrenaicism". (See pp. 84-86.)

If war should be suspended long enough for the academic world to return to its habits of otiose research, it might do a service to the world of letters by collecting relevant extracts from the first reviews of famous books. Those which I have been able to collect about Pater's *Renaissance* seem to conform to the usual impertinence and folly of hasty first impressions. The anonymous critic of Blackwood's thought the interpretation of Botticelli's Madonnas "one of the most incongruous and grotesque misinterpretations ever invented by man". Mrs. Mark Pattison, perhaps assisted by her husband, the querulous not to say pedantic Rector of Lincoln College, naturally pounced on the unjustified claim of the title, and wrote:

"We miss the sense of the connection between art and literature and the other forms of life of which they are the outward expression, and feel as if we were wandering in a world of unsubstantial dreams."

But the real offence of the book was not in these things, whether the critics were correct or not, but in the originality of Pater's temperament, the civilised quality of his mind and personality. Arthur Symonds goes to the point when he says of this book:

"Here was criticism as a fine art, written in prose which the reader lingered over as over poetry, modulated prose which made the splendour of Ruskin seem gaudy, the neatness of Matthew Arnold a mincing neatness, and the brass sound strident in the orchestra of Carlyle."

And the really dangerous enemy made by *The Renaissance* was the once friendly Jowett. This cherubic Cato could not have viewed Pater's "Cyrenaicism", his Goethe-and-Gautier aestheticism, with anything but abhorrence. Contrast their opinions on the aim and conduct of life. Says Pater:

"Well, we are all *condamnés*, as Victor Hugo says . . . we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song. . . . Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality

to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."

On the other hand, Jowett had stated the whole duty of man more concisely but from a very different point of view:

"Can any summary rule be given more than this, every day and every hour to frame yourself with a view to getting over a weakness?"

Or as Matthew Arnold rather acidly described it, "bracing the moral fibre".

Pater's courteous but unmistakable dissent from this very muscular Christianity was all the more annoying and distasteful, since in an ungarded moment the Master of Balliol had dropped one of his carefully premeditated and lapidary oracles on the topic of Pater. "I think you have a mind which will come to great eminence," he had said. And now this promising recruit had gone over to the enemy, to "art and self-indulgence". After reading Pater's *Renaissance*, the Master is said to have uttered a "stinging epigram" which unluckily has not been preserved. However deeply offended as a gentleman and a Christian, Jowett could do nothing about it at the moment; but a year later he saw his chance and took it. In 1874 came the turn of Brasenose to appoint the Junior Proctor, and Pater coveted the office (though strangely unfitted for it, one would suppose) for its prestige and extra salary. Then Jowett moved in a mysterious way, and someone else got the Proctorship. "Jowett," says A. C. Benson, "took up a line of definite opposition to Pater and used his influence to prevent his obtaining University work and appointments," adding naïvely a page or two later, "Jowett was indifferent to art, except in so far as it ministered to agreeable social intercourse".

Following this distinguished leadership, others began to view with alarm the quiet but subtle æsthete of Brasenose. Journalists now labelled him "leader of the æsthetic movement" and "hedonist", which latter word (as Pater discovered with horror) they thought meant "an immoral Greek". And in 1877 dislike and suspicion of Pater culminated in the publication of W. H. Mallock's *New Republic*.

Pater is not the sole or even chief contemporary satirised in this work, but he is attacked more vindictively and certainly with more smug contempt than any of his fellow victims. *The New Republic* is a satirical novel of talk in the manner of T. L. Peacock. Among its characters Dr. Jenkinson is meant for Jowett, Mr. Storks for T. H. Huxley, Mr. Stockton for Tyndall, Mr. Luke for Matthew Arnold, Mr. Herbert for Ruskin. Pater is "Mr. Rose the Pre-Raphaelite" (then

as now a term of abuse among artists' models), "a pale creature with large moustaches" who "always speaks in an undertone, and his two topics are self-indulgence and art".

Mallock had been at Balliol and was a friend of Addington Symonds, who revised the proofs of *The New Republic*. The fact that he satirises Jowett as well as Pater, Ruskin as well as Huxley, certainly shows impartiality. The confidence of a satirist is based on the belief that the world will agree with his scorn, and it is therefore interesting to see what an educated clever man thought the world would accept as a portrait of Pater between the *Renaissance* and *Marius*.

Mallock makes Mr. Rose-Pater scandalise his prim mixed audience by referring airily to "the shining of a woman's limbs in clear water", to the Italian Renaissance as "that strange child of Aphrodite and Tannhäuser" and "the exquisite groups and figures it reveals to us, of nobler mould than ours—Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Achilles and Patroclus, David and Jonathan, our English Edward and the fair Piers Gaveston. . . ." All this is not bad; but there is more to come.

"I look upon social dissolution" (says Mr. Rose) "as the true condition of the most perfect life. For the centre of life is the individual, and it is only through dissolution that the individual can re-emerge."

The caricature develops:

"'I was merely thinking,' said Mr. Rose . . . 'of a delicious walk I took last week, by the river side, between Charing Cross and Westminster. The great clock struck the chimes of midnight; a cool wind blew; and there went streaming on the wild wide waters with long vistas of reflected lights wavering and quivering in them; and I roamed about for hours, hoping I might see some unfortunate cast herself from the Bridge of Sighs. It was a night I thought well in harmony with despair. Fancy,' exclaimed Mr. Rose, 'the infinity of emotions which the sad sudden splash in the dark river would awaken in one's mind—and all due to that one poem of Hood's!'"

Later on Mr. Rose speaks in terms of horror of the ugliness of London:

"Think of the shapeless houses, the forest of ghastly chimney-pots, of the hell of distracting noises made by the carts, the cabs, the carriages—think of the bustling, commonplace, careworn crowds that jostle you—think of an omnibus—think of a four-wheeler. . . .

When I go to ugly houses, I often take a scrap of artistic crétonne with me in my pocket as a kind of æsthetic smelling-salts. . . ."

But for the fact that it is too intellectual and well-written, *The New Republic* from its point of view might have run as a serial in *Punch* with illustrations by George du Maurier. It sums up extremely well the attitude of contemporary society towards Pater, æstheticism, and indeed any art and literature not subservient to religious, commercial and class interests. The other guests at the country house party treat each other with the respect merit always feels for money, but Mr. Rose is invariably met with the utmost rudeness, whatever he says is interrupted or brushed aside or contradicted without apology. He is accused of addressing himself to "the half-educated", with strong insinuations that he is a homosexual, while the only thing he is represented as doing with any animation is bargaining to buy a pornographic book.

How far Pater was harmed by the various types of opposition and dislike usefully symbolised by Mallock's book it is hard to say. The new edition of *The Renaissance* published in the same year certainly dropped the "Conclusion" which contained the essence of Pater's "Cyrenaicism". Pater also dropped the Italian Renaissance as a theme, except for a lecture on Raphael in 1892, and some notes on Giordano Bruno in 1889. He could never have been a popular author, for he makes considerable demands of his readers, but he was prevented by the opposition from reaching the limited audience possible for him and from enjoying the reputation to which he was entitled. He never earned more than a hundred pounds a year by his writings, and in 1893 he was the only literary celebrity not invited by Oxford University to the Shelley Memorial ceremonies. "I was not asked," he replied gently to the queries of an amazed Edmund Gosse.

Among the other misdemeanours which made Pater so much disliked by the right-thinking persons of his time was the grave offence of furnishing his college rooms "in the æsthetic style". I must confess I had imagined these as a bit florid until I happened on the memorial notes of Edward Manson (*Oxford Magazine*, 1906), who had Pater for his tutor in 1869. He thus describes the rooms:

"They were panelled in a pale green tint, the floor was matted, the furniture was oak and severe in style, there were a few choice prints on the walls, choice books on the shelves, and a dwarf orange-tree, with real oranges on it, adorned the table."

The people who jeered at this as decadent æstheticism, themselves

inhabited drawing-rooms encumbered with ornate mahogany, flowered wall-paper, numberless gilt-framed pictures, stands and what-nots covered with an enormous clutter of objects ranging from Babylonian bricks to Presents from Brighton. They really ought to have been grateful to Pater for applying in Oxford what Whistler had learned from Paris about the Japanese.

In 1880 Pater took steps to break the monotony of his life and perhaps to make a bid for respectability by resigning his tutorship to write *Marius the Epicurean*, a task which occupied him for several years, including a winter spent in Rome. Unfortunately, Pater's "hide-thy-life" principles have deprived us of any records of this Roman episode, except what may be doubtfully inferred from the pages of *Marius*. No other place in the world could have satisfied him—not even Athens—as Rome could, for in itself and its age-old traditions and history it so strikingly embodies that complex, contradictory attitude which is the essence of both Pater's temperament and philosophy of life—a loyalty hesitating between Antiquity and Christianity, a reluctance to give up either, and a hopeless attempt, often abandoned always reviving, to find a satisfying formula in which both were harmonised. Among the visible examples of this in Rome, Pater would notice and appreciate the fact that the Vatican contains the world's largest collection of pagan statues—"idols of the heathen" as they were bluntly but not untruly called by the "barbarian" Mlemish Pope, Adrian VI. The Church, Pater saw, having overthrown and done its best to liquidate the older rival religions, had turned round and piously collected their relics. Over such amiable paradoxes he could muse for many delightful hours, unmolested by the "very objectionable people in Oxford".

Naturally, also, Pater sympathised with the point of view of the Renaissance prelates. He saw that it was not their intention to abolish the Faith which they inherited from centuries of predecessors, but somehow to incorporate with it the "culture" of earlier ages, in part the creation of their remote forefathers. Among laymen who made the attempt to reconcile these incompatibles was that Pico della Mirandola on whom Pater wrote an essay. A document in the same spirit, which Pater most certainly could have picked up in the Roman book-shops, is the *De Partu Virginis* of Sannazzaro, a most curious retelling of the Nativity story in Virgilian style and in terms of the older religions of Nature. To a man like Pater, prepared as he was to receive with docility the complex impressions of Rome, Sannazzaro's God who is also Jupiter Optimus Maximus would come to seem no stranger than the title "Pontifex Maximus" assumed by Renaissance Popes. Again, as Pater turned from the relics of the great pagan

civilisations to the catacombs or the Christian Museum at the Lateran, he must have been struck by the sweetness of feeling, the ardent humanity of the early Christian inscriptions. He had only to pass from the lofty splendour of antique marbles and of sonorous classical Latin to the epitaphs with their naïve unforced expressions of tender regret and affection to recognise that something new and precious had entered human experiences. Pater's own feelings were in closest harmony with the spirit of the place, and this complex of changing moods is the essence of *Marius the Epicurean* and one of the chief reasons for its perpetual charm.

Marius the Epicurean was published in two volumes in 1885. Although, like other permanent books, *Marius* had to wait more than a decade before the reading public discovered it, the critical reception of the book was far less hostile than that which met *The Renaissance*. There was now little or no question of burning with a clear gem-like flame and of making the æsthetic uttermost of every counted moment in a brief life without hope of resurrection. Early in the book the hedonist, Flavian (who partly represents the early Pater), is despatched to the funeral pyre; there is a Christian knight in shining armour who from time to time rides through the pages singing an unspecified hymn; while Marius himself, abandoning at least temporarily the wicked Cyrenaics for the Stoics, dies with the last rites of the Church, owing to his last moments being spent by accident as one of a band of arrested Christians on their way to martyrdom. Prejudices of readers and critics being thus soothed, there was less acerbity, less of that grudging note which met *The Renaissance*.

Evidently Pater considered the publication of *Marius* an event of importance. To the surprise of his acquaintances, he gave up the house he had rented in Oxford since 1869, and took a house at 12 Earl's Terrace, Kensington. People who knew Pater asked themselves and each other what was the motive for this abrupt move? Was it a desire to break away from the routine of habit, which is failure in life? Or was it, as he told Richard Jackson, because "there are in Oxford some very objectionable persons from whom I would gladly separate myself?"

There is no need to doubt the sincerity of Pater's explanation, but there was doubtless another and more ambitious motive he did not care to reveal. He was now forty-five and about to publish the *magnum opus* of his life, and now or never was the time to step beyond the jealous professionalism of Oxford to a wider and worldlier audience. Now was the time for Walter Pater to emerge from his tasteful little hermitage and make advances to Society. Hence this move, hence new sartorial adventures, hence Pater's presence at what George Moore

unkindly calls "the dullest houses in London". Alas, if Pater dreamed of playing the part of a respected Mr. Rose in real life, of being taken up by plutocratic Society, of competing successfully with his witty follower, Wilde, he was indeed mistaken. Though he spent his vacations in London during the years 1885 to 1893, and "went out" with exemplary persistence, he never became a Society celebrity. Indeed, as Wilde said on another occasion, the very idea was "grotesque and irreligious".

In other respects the move was not without benefits, of a more or less doubtful sort. Pater was able to see something of his non-academic colleagues, from Moore to Wilde, from Lionel Johnson to Arthur Symonds. He wrote some signed reviews—always a dangerous indulgence for a writer of positive gifts. He published *Imaginary Portraits*, erroneously supposed by many to be his best book; re-issued *The Renaissance* with a very slightly altered "Conclusion" restored (perhaps as a mild defiance to the "very objectionable people" at Oxford) and recklessly began publishing *Gaston* before he had finished it, with the result that he never did finish it. And in 1893 he abandoned his London house and silently returned to Oxford, defeated perhaps but not depressed, to a house at 64 St. Giles'.

Since Pater appears to have kept up his custom of Continental travel, it is difficult to reconcile this increased occupation with the picture often given of him in that part of his life as a debilitated invalid of extreme preciosity. It was said that he breakfasted in bed and then lay in a fragile manner propped on cushions and pillows, reading the dictionary. Occasionally he made a convulsive effort, rose at eleven, and delivered a lecture—to an audience of eight or ten.

It is a seductive picture, but really more worthy of the satirical Mr. Mallock than of an official or semi-official biographer. Nevertheless it is true that at the age of fifty Pater was already an old man whose charm had distinctly waned and given place to a weary courtesy. Some have thought that this weariness had grown so great that Pater had entirely abandoned the hedonism of manhood and returned to his boyish notion of taking holy orders. There is a story about this which is worthy of Talleyrand:

"Having heard from a common friend that Pater had 'become almost a Christian', Mr. Moorhouse ventured to enquire before leaving (little thinking that he would never see Pater again) whether it was true that he had seen cause to change his opinions on religion. But Pater put by the question with a smile. 'Ah,' said he, 'what discussions we used to have in those old days!' He then spoke of Mr. Moorhouse's poems, and begged him to continue to write hymns.

'We do so much need good hymns,' he said, 'and you are just the person to write them.' " (Wright's *Life of Walter Pater*.)

In spite of his alleged valetudinarism, Pater was killed only by an unexpected combination of dangerous illnesses. In June 1894 he had rheumatic fever, and was nursed by his sisters and the indefatigable Mrs. J. R. Green (J. A. Symonds's sister Charlotte), who seems to have made a habit of watching over the sick-beds of Oxford heroes. Apparently his nurses put Pater to sit by an open window before he had recovered, with the result that he was stricken with pleurisy. A second serious illness coming so quickly might easily have been instantly fatal, but Pater still had the strength to rally from the pleurisy. Unfortunately he seems not to have been sufficiently warned about the weakness of the heart which follows rheumatic fever. He was allowed to leave his bedroom, for the first time after this second illness, on the 29th July (1894), and died the next morning of heart failure. He was buried in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford, with the inscription: *In te Domine speravi*.

II

Material for Pater's life is scanty and on the whole colourless, while the suppression of his letters makes it impossible to get very close to the man as he really was. On the other hand, we have all the writings published during his life and some posthumously issued work; and, after all, these writings he has bequeathed us are all that really remain of him and what is important to us. But, for a war-weary generation, scrambling on somehow from day to day, Pater's work may seem as remote as Pater's epoch. This easy cosmopolitan travelling in time and space, this leisurely visiting of old books, old pictures, old statues, old towns, may only raise envy of those fabulous times when a man could take a ticket for anywhere in Europe at a moment's notice, legally own his old gold, and legally change it anywhere. How (I cannot help wondering) will a generation so sorely harassed look upon the writings of one whose chief problem was how to enjoy life with intelligence and sensibility and knowledge? To apply the principle which Pater took without acknowledgment from Goethe—what do these books mean to *us*? I shall not pretend to answer that question in a sentence.

Fundamentally Pater was neither prose-poet nor critic, but something in between the two, with the critic or at any rate the man of letters predominating. The fact that good literary critics are rarer

than good poets need not cause either elation or depression, and rather too much has been made of it. After all, Galapagos tortoises which are ugly are much rarer than antelopes which are very attractive. On the other hand the multitude of literary critics who are not good is enormous and oppressive, especially since they naturally rate their own ungraceful carplings above the work of people who can produce other types of writing; which results in a sort of intellectualist Gresham's Law—i.e. bad writing drives out good. Probably the happy and healthy state for arts of all kinds is neither in the monastery nor the lecture-room, but in the workshop where criticism is chiefly by emulation, and successful criticism consists in doing a good thing better.

In spite of wars and revolutions and the exigencies of the common man we still have (by what miracle?) an immense amount of art and literature inherited from the past. As long as there is any esteem for this heritage, it will need curators and critics, above all critics with the rare gifts of appreciation and interpretation. Among the defects of criticism we must deplore the acrimonious tone and the dogmatic precept—as if a critic were an eighteenth century schoolmaster with a disordered liver and a too active cane. There have been too many fusty or frivolous pedants giving forth dogmatic rules of literary and artistic procedure in matters where they were ludicrously incompetent. To this, many gifted men in the nineteenth century added an intolerable love of preaching. Out-bidding the melancholy Jacques they saw sermons in everything, and pitilessly delivered them. Of such was the kingdom of Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, and a multitude who did not possess their remarkable gifts.

Acrimonious criticism is a kind of literary cock-fighting, and one can only deplore the fact that a luminous poet like Pope should have wasted so much time, ability and nervous energy on a purely negative work, *The Dunciad*. The retaliation no doubt was richly deserved, but it only immortalised the people it was supposed to destroy.

The criticism of precept may be traced far back through European writing to the "Poetics" of Aristotle, a work in some respects of extraordinary merit, though it contains statements of very doubtful validity, and abounds in *vérités à la Palisse*, including two whole sections on the most elementary facts of speech and grammar. With Aristotle analytic generalisation tends to become precept, and instead of saying "this is what the poets do", he says or implies "this is what poets ought to do". From this arose the belief in rules and the "critic" in the role of a birch-bearing dominie whose duty it was to flog erring creative writers. Hence the brutalities of the old Quarterly, Edinburgh and Blackwood's, of Jeffrey and Gifford,

Croker and Lockhart, "this-will-never do", "back-to-your-gallipots".

A quite different tendency may be traced to "Longinus", who showed clearly that the aim of literature (and of the other arts) is to give intellectual pleasure, and hence that no art needs to be justified by supposed secondary utilities. Quality is determined, not by rules and experts, but by the response of the audiences for whom the specific work is intended, and this is not the result of following formulas but of gifted and powerful personalities. Thus "Longinus" (whoever he was) started the opposite kind of criticism—the criticism of enthusiasm, appreciation, interpretation, showing what is admirable rather than what is supposed to need reprehension. The object of "Longinus" is not critical legislation but the attainment and sharing of the highest forms of intellectual enjoyment. Above all, he avoids wasting time on such flimsy paradoxes as Aristotle's arguments to prove that poetry is "more serious and scientific" than history.

Though Pater was obviously of the party of "Longinus", he never quotes him as far as I recollect, while he often quotes Aristotle and was much influenced by Platonic ideas. The chief influence on Pater was not any writer of antiquity, but Goethe. Though hardly a professional critic, Goethe could not speak or write on any topic of art and literature without hitting off some vivid suggestion, some highly important and profound remark. His criticism is all the better for being mostly free from the apparatus and pretence of formal criticism, especially as he tends always to raise the subject from specialist and pedantic interests to a wide, serene world of universal culture. Informal criticism has produced some of the critical masterpieces of our own literature—the "defences" of poetry by Sidney and Shelley, the Francis Thompson essay on Shelley, Wordsworth's and Arnold's prefaces, and, more recently, the slangy, erratic, but highly original remarks on American Literature by D. H. Lawrence.

Pater had a great, perhaps exaggerated admiration for Charles Lamb, and some have been tempted to write of them as kindred spirits. There is something in this, but in so many ways Pater was more akin to the solitary genius of Thomas Gray who might have stood among the highest of our critics (in the widest and best sense), for it is clear from his Letters and fragmentary notes that he anticipated Rousseau and even Goethe. We may lament Gray's indolence and streak of foppishness, but the fact is he suffered all the loneliness of a man too far ahead of his time. After the death of West and the never really healed breach with Walpole, he had no one to write for until he met Bonstetten, and then it was too late. If Pater was forced to "hide his life", what compulsion to do so must there have been on Gray in that chauvinist, philistine, purse-proud, pedigreed society of the

eighteenth century? Gray had probably even more reasons for sheltering in Peterhouse and Pembroke than Pater for "hiding his life" behind the walls of Brasenose.

There are two important differences between Gray and Pater, which determined their lives as writers. The writing and publication of his poems satisfied the creative impulse in Gray and whatever literary ambition he may have had, but he lacked some point of concentration for all the learning and sensitive appreciation and genuine discovery which did not find expression in verse. In Pater the frustrated poet gives colour and warmth to his prose, while his duties as coach and tutor supplied him with form and motive for the expression of his "sensations and ideas". It was the unsatisfied poet in Pater who gradually developed essays into "imaginary portraits", or "prose idylls" as he would have liked to call them.

Pater had laid down the principle that:

"To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought."

And again:

"What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy. . . ."

Now, it would seem as if the intellectuals of this century had set out to burlesque Pater's ideas by applying them too literally. This "regarding all things as fashions" and "ever courting new impressions" has turned the palace of art into a giant *Aesthetic Fun Fair*, where newer and wilder exhibits vie with one another, and a jaded if impetuous public calls incessantly for bigger thrills and cleverer titbits. Among the exhibits and side shows have been Russian novelists and American poets, Muscovite ballets and Studio 28 films, African idols and Mexican mosaic masks, Japanese novels and Chinese poems, *Les Chants de Maldoror* and "Frankie and Johnny", Brancusi's sea-shore eggs and Henry Moore's calamitous excrescences. Painting has been a vertiginous harlequinade of Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, Fauves, Futurists, Cubists, Vorticists, Expressionists, Abstractionists, Surrealists, and music has ranged from the tortured pigs of Stravinski's "Sacre" to the jig-a-jig of Jellyroll Morton's Red Hot Peppers, while the whole Fun Fair shakes and stamps to the inescapable crescendos of Ravel's "Boléro".

Voilà où mènent les mauvais chemins. After decades of this *fracas*, it will do none of us any harm to turn aside and enter a quiet lecture room and listen to a gentle voice speaking of the European tradition. As long as our aircraft-carrier island remains (unfortunately) anchored off the misty north-western shores of Europe, and any breathing space is granted for the living of life and not a mere scramble to survive, the study of the influences which have built civilisation as we know it or aspire to it will lie chiefly within the areas marked out by Pater's interests. Pater certainly did not wish (as the quotations just made show) that these should remain static, a body of orthodoxy to which no additions or alterations must be made, a republic of letters which is forbidden to annex new territory. But the prudent use he made of his own principles of "fashions" and "courting new impressions" is a testimony to his good sense and good taste, his "divine moderation". Without it there is always the chance that the republic of art and letters may collapse into totalitarian regimes labelled Journalism or Politics.

If we believe that there is a genuine difference between a "culture-complex" (which means any group functioning as gregarious tool-making animals) and "civilisation" (which means humanely-ordered men seeking finer ways of feeling and living), then the world of Walter Pater has much to offer us. The virtues and vices of "class" are a delusion. Any mob of any class or of all classes mixed, when it is a mob, will tend to the same collective distractions of racing, gambling, alcohol, all crude sensations at their rawest. You end up by deifying half-witted criminals and bottom dogs. And if you join the *Æsthetic Fun Fair*, in the end you will find yourself calling for the identical raw crudities—is it not the super-highbrow who prefers the detective story to the novel, jazz to music, and *Helzapoppin* to *Henry V*?

Pater's reasonableness in the choice of themes thus avoided provincial nationalism on the one hand and the dangers of too much cosmopolitan change of fashion on the other hand. There was a danger here. If the uneducatable live in an ever shrinking circle of what touches only themselves, and the over-educated exhaust their sensibilities by too frantic a search for novelties, may not a mind like Pater's end up by refusing to accept anything new, and settle into a narrow orthodoxy of accepted masterpieces? As we already have seen, just that accusation was made against Pater, i.e. that in his later years he lay in bed till noon reading only the dictionary—*La chair est triste, hélas, et j'ai lu tous les livres*. How can that be reconciled with his increased production and friendship with younger men like Moore and Wilde, Symonds and Lionel Johnson?

It was of course Pater's temperament which saved him from both academic dullness and *avant-garde* excesses. His personality had all the obstinate strength of the timid when pressed upon too heavily. His serenity, his cheerfulness, his fastidious good taste, his eagerness to put before us the best he has discovered—these qualities may prevent him from reaching the great heights but save him also from the excesses and defects so obvious in his contemporaries, Carlyle and Arnold, Ruskin and J. A. Symonds. Certainly these writers produced passages and aspirations more thrilling than anything Pater wrote, but unlike them he never forgot that "the aim of culture is not rebellion but peace".

Certainly this temperament of Pater's was pleasure-loving, or, if you agree with the prim lady in *The New Republic*, "self-indulgent", but not in the ordinary sense. The pleasures and indulgences were intellectual and æsthetic, and the delight of the senses was to be restrained and decorous, with æstheticism by no means excluding asceticism of a comely sort. It was Pater who picked from Gautier's writings a phrase which the minor æsthetes soon wore out by their incessant application of it to themselves—"he was one for whom the visible world existed". The pleasure of the eye formed a large part of Pater's philosophy of enjoyment, but this æstheticism, this ever-renewed joy in the changing beauty of things did not close up for him the seemingly rival and hostile worlds of philosophy and religion. But to attract Pater philosophy and religion must be beautiful—he would not drink the water of wisdom or the wine of salvation from an old tin mug. Philosophy must not be presented in arid ponderous treatises, but in some golden dialogue of Plato. How characteristic of Pater and of his personal interpretations that he applied to Plato that phrase of Gautier I have just quoted, and that he contrived to find in the text of the dialogues authority for the view that Plato too believed in art for art's sake!

But religion? Here, especially in his own time, Pater's temperament left him peculiarly open to misunderstanding and censure. Now of course people will either shrug off religion contemptuously and hence be unwilling to concede its importance in Pater's life, or, if they take it seriously, will certainly be indignant at the notion that religion may be a matter of "mere" æsthetic preference. How personal Pater's views were, how much he was accustomed to read his own views and tastes into even the greatest characters, may be judged from the fact that in *Marius* he speaks gravely of "the divine moderation of Our Lord", a view which Henry James instantly noted and denounced. Yet this disposition to look on religion as an æsthetic spectacle in which one may take part without yielding the ceremony any real belief

certainly dated back to Pater's days in Canterbury. While he was feeding his scepticism with Voltaire and his neo-Hellenism with Goethe, he could not help delighting in the grandeur of the cathedral, feeding upon the ritual and the music, the jewelled windows and the great memories of the past, the sculptured stones and the eloquence of Arthur Stanley.

Late in life Pater tried to renew these sensations by attending the services, of a highly ritualistic kind, performed by a company of extremely opulent curates who called themselves Augustinians and functioned in the East End. Their leader, who dubbed himself "Father" Nugée (a disquieting old bird from the look of his photograph) censured this frivolity by saying pointedly: "We don't want mere sight-seers." To which Pater instantly replied: "The Church of England is nothing to me apart from its ornate services." There you have it in a phrase.

In Pater's day—and we cannot claim that it is much better to-day—there were a harshness and dullness, a brutality about everyday living blandly sanctioned by business and politics, religion and law. From the cruel squalor of the slums, the banal ordinariness of comfort-worshipping suburbs, the tasteless opulence of palaces, Pater turned in despair, trying to build for himself a nook and a dream of comeliness and serenity—thereby arousing the ire of the godly and the devotion of gifted youth. That Pater was nevertheless forced to dress as a *croquemort* to avoid disturbances is one more proof of the strength of the eternal opposition—now to be found wearing utility clothing in a pre-fabricated house under a drizzle of statistics.

This shrinking from the world's ugliness and concentration on every radiant experience makes one think of the motto on Hazlitt's sundial which recorded only sunny hours—*nil nisi horas serenas numero*. The persuasive exposition of this doctrine undoubtedly was dangerous to the reckless and frivolous among Pater's disciples who took the doctrine too literally, and ignored Pater's urging of the necessity, the equal beauty, of discipline, *ascēsis*, "a girding of the loins". It was fatal to Wilde, if it really did have the effect on him he claims in *De Profundis*.

It led Pater himself into generalities of doubtful validity. He says:

"... the essence of humanism is . . . that belief that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality."

But the Italian humanists expressed no such view, and we may well ask to what extent facts justify this wide assumption. The quotation

comes from the essay on Pico, to whom Pater could not help attributing his own views. And while Pater would no doubt have admitted, did admit regretfully, that you cannot serve Christ and Aphrodite too, or feel an equal reverence for the nymphs and the saints, still he had always a fellow feeling for those who attempted the impossible syncretism. Like the men of the Renaissance, Pater wanted to make the best of both religious worlds, to run with the pagan hare and hunt with the Christian hounds. He asserts, for instance, that the pagan poetry of Provence only yields its full flavour in a Christian setting. But the idea runs through much of Pater's work, even in Hellenism, when he balances an exposition of the Bacchanals by a eulogy of hard Lacedæmon.

The situation occurs so often in Pater's work because it was an essential part of his temperament, exasperating to his enemies and baffling to his friends, whom it sharply divided. Frank Harris and George Moore see only the pagan side of Pater, because that is all they want to see. For the same reason, more or less pious Oxford friends were ready to believe that eventually Pater was converted and ripe for holy orders and a canonry. No doubt he would have accepted them, if offered, but in the spirit of that Renaissance prelate who is alleged to have inserted in his crucifix an antique cameo of the Foamborn.

Hence it is that Pater came to dwell so affectionately upon epochs of sudden and perplexing change in intellectual and religious things—the Renaissance and the age of the Antonines. Hence, too, his pre-occupation with fancies about the gods in exile. The idea came to him, of course, from Heine, but Pater was seldom more happily inspired than when he slowly distilled, in "*Denys l'Auxerrois*", a legend of the return of Dionysus to the ways of men in the Middle Ages. The companion piece, "*Apollo in Picardy*", is said to have been inspired by an old engraving of a picture by Domenichino, but is less happy in its result.

"Imaginary portraits", "prose idylls"—somehow they suggest a prose counterpart to Browning's "*Men and Women*". But Browning hides behind a scrupulous objectivity, while so often Pater cannot refrain from projecting himself into those he was portraying. To be "neither for God nor for his enemies" is certainly a striking characteristic of Pater, but does it really apply to Botticelli and his Madonnas? Perhaps Pater had not lived long enough in Italy to know that "the Botticelli Madonna" is still a rare but persistent type of feminine beauty in Italy, with just the same delicate face, wistful refinement and melancholy grace. What the face meant to Botticelli can only be guessed, but he was certainly painting from models whose type yet remains.

Again, just ten years after Edmond de Goncourt's book had brought Watteau permanently back into fashion, Pater wrote "A Prince of Court Painters" which ends with the now famous words:

"He had been a sick man all his life. He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all."

The first sentence is true—Watteau suffered from tuberculosis. The second sentence is a perfect summing up of Walter Pater, but there is little in the records of Watteau's life or in his paintings to suggest that it has any truth at all so far as he was concerned. In the case of an imaginary character, Marius, it was legitimate to give him Pater's horror of snakes and Pater's remorse about his dead mother, but it is carrying the "prose idyll" idea too far when personal traits and whims are attributed to historical characters. When Henry James picked on that phrase in *Marius* about the "divine moderation of Our Lord" he put his finger on a weakness in Pater which must not be concealed. We must always remember that Pater's "portraits" are deliberately named "imaginary".

It is also characteristic of Pater that he builds his portraits generally round "documents", a picture or a poem or one or more translations. "Leonardo da Vinci" works up to and then gradually down from the ornate and rhetorical passage about Mona Lisa. "Joachim du Bellay" is built round the charming little lyric translated from Navagero ("*A vous, troupe légère . . .*"), which is more characteristic of the Pléiade in general than of du Bellay in particular—a grave and sometimes satirical poet. "Pascal", even, centres round the selection of translated "Pensées" which fills two or three of its pages; and even behind Sebastian van Storck one feels Pater's paraphrasing of Spinoza.

Pater is a master of prose translation, and no one should miss the perfectly chosen passages from "Aucassin and Nicolette" and "Amis and Amile" which are the foundation stones of "Two Early French Stories". Again, the "Demeter and Persephone" is based on a subtle counterpoint of translated passages from the Homeric Hymns, the "Thalysia" of Theocritus, Ovid's "Fasti" and Claudian's "Rape of Persephone". And it is hardly necessary to point out how much *Marius* owes to the Cupid and Psyche episode from the "Metamorphoseon" of Apuleius, and to skilful *pastiches* of Marcus Aurelius, Fronto and Lucian.

Marius the Epicurean affects the form of a novel, but the reader who takes it too literally as such is likely to be disappointed. It should

be read as the greatest and most ambitious of Pater's prose idylls, an imaginary portrait of which we may say what was said of Flaubert's "Salammbô", that "the pedestal is too big for the statue". In the case of *Marius* this does not matter much, for Pater was mostly concerned with his own sensations and ideas, and little enough with the actions and character of Marius, who is an abstraction only more animated than the impossible Cornelius. Take *Marius* as a story and you must be disappointed, probably bored. It should be taken as a survey of religions and philosophies from Heraclitus of Ephesus to Christian Rome, of imperial Roman society at the moment when it was at its best under the rule of the most philosophical Emperor. It is a "survey of culture" at one of those decisive changing points in Europe's life, so fascinating to one who was himself "wandering between two worlds". It was a strange way to amuse the subscribers to Mudie's Library, but unlike the usual wares peddled from that establishment it was a contribution to English literature.

The chapters of *Gaston de Latour* can be detached and read as separate essays. This is scarcely true of *Marius*, yet perhaps the book is most effective when read in brief portions of two or three chapters at a time and no more. I must dissent from the Ilibernian enthusiasm of George Moore who, on reading the chapter headed "White-Nights", felt that England had at last been granted the Continental type of novelist she lacked. But it is hardly possible to read that chapter and the next one, "Change of Air", without falling under the spell of their gravely beautiful words and unworldly serenity. With exquisite skill and persuasion Pater, in his unhurried fashion, leads us to the point he wishes to make, the quotation which is the pivot of this section of the book:

"If thou wouldst have all about thee like the colours of some fresh picture, in a clear light, be temperate in thy religious notions, in love, in wine, in all things, and of a peaceful heart with thy fellows."

Not to multiply instances tediously—the two chapters on Epicurean philosophy, "Animula Vagula" and (especially) "The New Cyrenaicism" can easily be detached and read apart from the rest of the book. Above all, it is essential not to rush at Pater and especially not at *Marius*—he must be read in the same detached leisurely manner he wrote.

It is probably wise to admit that Pater's is the work of a *dilettante*—and we need not recoil from the word if we recollect that its real meaning is "one who delights in the arts and the things of the mind

for their own sake". Pater wrote because writing enabled him to enjoy more fully and intelligently what he loved in the world and the creations of men's minds and hands. He was also a graceful and tactful revealer of these things to others who were willing to listen. He never scolds, never preaches, never pontificates, never sneers, never splits hairs, never patronises, never browbeats, never wrangles. No English prose writer has better manners. He does not affect wit, and the pedantries which afflict learning and ignorance alike are alien to him. The life of the mind and of "the senses purged" was his theme, which he presents with rare gentleness and persuasion.

All Pater's books were occasionally used by him to express his own highly personal views and "philosophy", and the reader cannot help noticing that Pater is the origin (so far as England is concerned) of æsthetic views which are held to be peculiarly modern, just as in scholarship he recognised and proclaimed "the twelfth century Renaissance" fifty years before the professional scholars. I have already spoken of his view of "all things and principles of things as inconstant modes and fashions" which has dominated æsthetic taste for so long. But it was also Pater who held the equally dangerous view that poetry is all the better for not being lucid (when did great poets write nonsense?) and that "all art tends to the condition of music", which is abstractionism. He held that:

"In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a few moments on the wall or floor: is itself, in truth, a space of such fallen light, caught as the colours are in an Eastern carpet, but refined upon, and dealt with more subtly than by nature itself."

Dear me! How we have been crushed these thirty years and more with that "Eastern carpet" by noisy enthusiasts who certainly had no notion that they were quoting the abhorred Walter Pater. And how willingly after these years of putting those ideas into practice we would treat the resulting pictures as carpets. But Pater is hardly to be blamed for this, as his shade hovers in the background murmuring in agitation, "divine moderation", "ascèsis", "burn with a clear gem-like flame".

It is natural to ask what effect Pater's work has had on other writers. His influence on the next generation—Wilde, Moore, Lionel Johnson, Yeats, Arthur Symonds—is too obvious to need comment. But soon after them came the inevitable break, the reaction, and Pater went rapidly out of favour. The most successful adaptation of Pater's

methods and attitude is a book which has deservedly been most widely circulated in the United States, though it seems little known in England—I mean Rachel Annand Taylor's *Leonardo the Florentine*. This poetically written book disregards the proportions and principles of an ordinary biography, to paint in brilliant hues a vast nostalgic fresco of the Italian Renaissance, a "prose Idyll" on a great scale, which should satisfy the most ardent yearning "for something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all."

Culture—the word has become an abomination which is not made more acceptable by spelling it "kulchur" or by re-importing it in slick packages from America. We lack a word to express the idea of complete education, or civilised training of mind, muscles and senses, which was Pater's ideal. It was a rare gift which enabled him to show so vividly the charm, life and vigour in the classics of Antiquity, when they had been made trite and worn by more than four centuries of intensive or conventional study. To take subjects which the vulgar consider "dry" and the highbrows vote "academic", and to invest them with new glamour, a wistful attractiveness, is part of Pater's achievement. When Lionel Johnson read *Plato and Platonism* and wrote: "Oh, to be reading Greats at B.N.C."; he talked like an Oxford snob, but he implied a valuable truth—that Pater was a wonderful inspirer of young men. No one who comes under his influence before the age of twenty will ever be content to remain gross and ignorant.

Every age is an age of transition, but it may be that ours is much more than this, that it is becoming one of those violent breaks with the past, with tradition, which put men into a hateful attitude of hostility and destruction to all that they have inherited—the spirit which burned the Greek lyrists at Byzantium and smashed the stained glass in Reformation England. The break of the Renaissance, though preceding and accompanying the Protestant wars of religion in the north, was intellectual and artistic, superannuating without physical violence much that had been revered and created during the millenium which went before. But if now certain world trends and pseudo-philosophies should indeed result in the ultimate violences and destructions, any surviving fragment of humanity will be too much preoccupied with the mere animal urge of survival to care or even know about "the things of the mind" which across the millenia have alike interested a Plato and a Pater. Even a less calamitous adoption of old heresy disguised as new panacea must result in a contemptuous repudiation of all that has for so many centuries formed the material of "culture", and would sweep away Pater along with many more

precious things into that oblivion of destruction which befell the libraries and temples of Antiquity. Until and unless that evil time comes, Pater will hold, and under favourable circumstances greatly increase, his civilising influence, particularly over sensitive and studious youth.

SOME DATES IN THE LIFE OF WALTER PATER

- 1839. 4th August, birth of Walter Horatio Pater, second son of Richard Glode Pater and his wife, *née* Maria Hill. At that time Pater's father was practising as a surgeon in partnership with his brother, at Marine Place, Commercial Road, Stepney.
- 1844. Death of Pater's father. The widow moves with her four children to a small house at Chase Side, Infield.
- 1848. Death of Walter Pater's grandmother, Hester.
- 1853. The family move to the village of Harbledown, near Canterbury, so that Pater may attend King's School.
- 1854. 25th February, death of Pater's mother. The orphans are left to the care of an aunt. Pater becomes a King's Scholar, and meets Keble who is said to have influenced him greatly for a time.
- 1856. Pater begins to write voluminously: poems, essays, stories. Except for a few fragments all these were later destroyed. According to Wright, Pater is permanently injured by a kick from another boy.
- 1858. Pater reads Voltaire and Goethe, and his religious fervour begins to fade. He wins a scholarship to Queen's College, Oxford, of sixty pounds a year tenable for three years. He spends Christmas in Heidelberg studying German.
- 1859. Pater abandons Christianity, and in July 'tours through Germany.
- 1860. Meets Addington Symonds and other intellectuals of his generation, and receives private tuition in Greek from Professor Jowett (Master of Balliol) who later tells Pater: "I think you have a mind which will come to great eminence." Pater burns his early writings. Deeply under the influence of Goethe. "Henceforward Pater lived in a kind of disguise."
- 1862. Pater fails to obtain First Class Honours in Lit. Hum. and is placed in the Second Class. After taking his degree works for two years in poverty as a private coach at Oxford.
- 1864. 5th February, elected probationary Fellow of Brasenose College. Writes *Diaphaneité*—said to be a "portrait" of his friend

Shadwell, afterwards Provost of Oriel—the earliest of Pater's acknowledged writings.

1865. 5th February. Pater's Fellowship made permanent. He visits Italy with Shadwell.
1866. January, his first publication, the essay on Coleridge, appears in the *Westminster Review*. "Pater's life falls into a routine for many years"—term-time in Oxford, vacation-time in æsthetic tours on the Continent.
1869. Pater and his sisters take a house in Bradmore Road, Oxford. Friendly with C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll).
1873. Publication of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, which has "a mixed reception". Many readers were "provoked by it", and it is criticised by Mrs. Mark Pattison, wife of the Rector of Lincoln College. *Blackwood's Magazine* says Pater's view of Botticelli's Madonnas is "one of the most incongruous and grotesque misrepresentations ever invented by man."
1874. Jowett, now the great power in Oxford, is incensed by some unguarded remarks of Pater and by *The Renaissance*. It is generally admitted that he prevented Pater from being appointed Junior Proctor and from obtaining other University employment.
1877. Publication of W. H. Mallock's *The New Republic*, satirising intellectual figures of the day, including Pater. Second edition of *The Renaissance*, from which "The Conclusion" was omitted. Pater meets R. C. Jackson, who afterwards claimed to have inspired *Marius*.
1880. Pater resigns his College Tutorship in order to devote himself to writing *Marius the Epicurean*.
1882. The winter spent in Rome, presumably for the purposes of *Marius*.
1885. February, publication of *Marius the Epicurean* in two volumes. This book, with its Christian ending, is much better received than *The Renaissance*. Pater gives up his Oxford house ("there are so many objectionable people in Oxford"), and during vacation lives with his sisters at 12 Earl's Terrace, Kensington.
1887. Publication of *Imaginary Portraits*.
1888. From June to October *Gaston de Latour* runs as a serial, but Pater is unable to complete it. Third edition of *Renaissance*, with "Conclusion" restored in a slightly modified form.

1889. Publication of *Appreciations*. Reviews Arthur Symonds's *Nights and Days*.
1891. Reviews *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, praising Wilde's "genial laughter-loving sense of life".
1893. Gives up London house, and returns to Oxford. Publication of *Plato and Platonism*. In spite of his publications, Pater is one of the few men of letters not officially invited by Oxford to the Shelley Centenary celebrations.
1894. 30th July, death of Pater from heart failure following pleurisy and rheumatic fever. Buried in Hollywell Cemetery, Oxford.

INTRODUCTORY

THE CHILD IN THE HOUSE

PREFACE TO *THE RENAISSANCE*

THE CHILD IN THE HOUSE.*

As Florian Dealeal walked, one hot afternoon, he overtook by the wayside a poor aged man, and, as he seemed weary with the road, helped him on with the burden which he carried, a certain distance. And as the man told his story, it chanced that he named the place, a little place in the neighbourhood of a great city, where Florian had passed his earliest years, but which he had never since seen, and, the story told, went forward on his journey comforted. And that night, like a reward for his pity, a dream of that place came to Florian, a dream which did for him the office of the finer sort of memory, bringing its object to mind with a great clearness, yet, as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself, and above ordinary retrospect. The true aspect of the place, especially of the house there in which he had lived as a child, the fashion of its doors, its hearths, its windows, the very scent upon the air of it, was with him in sleep for a season; only, with tints more musically blent on wall and floor, and some finer light and shadow running in and out along its curves and angles, and with all its little carvings daintier. He awoke with a sigh at the thought of almost thirty years which lay between him and that place, yet with a flutter of pleasure still within him at the fair light, as if it were a smile, upon it. And it happened that this accident of his dream was just the thing needed for the beginning of a certain design he then had in view, the noting, namely, of some things in the story of his spirit—in that process of brain-building by which we are, each one of us, what we are. With the image of the place so clear and favourable upon him, he fell to thinking of himself therein, and how his thoughts had grown up to him. In that half-spiritualised house he could watch the better, over again, the gradual expansion of the soul which had come to be there—of which indeed, through the law which makes the material objects about them so large an element in children's lives, it had actually become a part; inward and outward being woven through and through each other into one inextricable texture—half, tint and trace and accident of homely colour and form, from the wood and the bricks; half, mere soul-stuff, floated thither from who knows how far. In the house and garden of his dream he saw a child moving, and could divide the main streams at

*Published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Aug. 1878.

least of the winds that had played on him, and study so the first stage in that mental journey.

The *old house*, as when Florian talked of it afterwards he always called it (as all children do, who can recollect a change of home, soon enough but not too soon to mark a period in their lives) really was an old house; and an element of French descent in its inmates—descent from Watteau, the old court-painter, one of whose gallant pieces still hung in one of the rooms—might explain, together with some other things, a noticeable trimness and comely whiteness about everything there—the curtains, the couches, the paint on the walls with which the light and shadow played so delicately; might explain also the tolerance of the great poplar in the garden, a tree most often despised by English people, but which French people love, having observed a certain fresh way its leaves have of dealing with the wind, making it sound, in never so slight a stirring of the air, like running water.

The old-fashioned, low wainscoting went round the rooms, and up the staircase with carved balusters and shadowy angles; landing half-way up at a broad window, with a swallow's nest below the sill, and the blossom of an old pear-tree showing across it in late April, against the blue, below which the perfumed juice of the find of fallen fruit in autumn was so fresh. At the next turning came the closet which held on its deep shelves the best china. Little angel faces and reedy flutings stood out round the fireplace of the children's room. And on the top of the house, above the large attic, where the white mice ran in the twilight—an infinite, unexplored wonderland of childish treasures, glass beads, empty scent-bottles still sweet, thrum of coloured silks, among its lumber—a flat space of roof, railed round, gave a view of the neighbouring steeples; for the house, as I said, stood near a great city, which sent up heavenwards, over the twisting weather-vanes, not seldom, its beds of rolling cloud and smoke, touched with storm or sunshine. But the child of whom I am writing did not hate the fog because of the crimson lights which fell from it sometimes upon the chimneys, and the whites which gleamed through its openings, on summer mornings, on turret or pavement. For it is false to suppose that a child's sense of beauty is dependent on any choiceness or special fineness, in the objects which present themselves to it, though this indeed comes to be the rule with most of us in later life; earlier, in some degree, we see inwardly; and the child finds for itself, and with unstinted delight, a difference for the sense, in those whites and reds through the smoke on very homely buildings, and in the gold of the dandelions at the road-side, just beyond the houses, where not a handful of earth is virgin and

untouched, in the lack of better ministries to its desire of beauty.

This house then stood not far beyond the gloom and rumours of the town, among high garden-walls, bright all summer-time with Golden-rod, and brown-and-golden Wall-flower—*Flos Parietis*, as the children's Latin-reading father taught them to call it, while he was with them. Tracing back the threads of his complex spiritual habit, as he was used in after years to do, Florian found that he owed to the place many tones of sentiment afterwards customary with him, certain inward lights under which things most naturally presented themselves to him. The coming and going of travellers to the town along the way, the shadow of the streets, the sudden breath of the neighbouring gardens, the singular brightness of bright weather there, its singular darknesses which linked themselves in his mind to certain engraved illustrations in the old big Bible at home, the coolness of the dark, cavernous shops round the great church, with its giddy winding stair up to the pigeons and the bells—a citadel of peace in the heart of the trouble—all this acted on his childish fancy, so that ever afterwards the like aspects and incidents never failed to throw him into a well-recognised imaginative mood, seeming actually to have become a part of the texture of his mind. Also, Florian could trace home to this point a pervading preference in himself for a kind of comeliness and dignity, an *urbanity* literally, in modes of life, which he connected with the pale people of towns, and which made him susceptible to a kind of exquisite satisfaction in the trimness and well-considered grace of certain things and persons he afterwards met with, here and there, in his way through the world.

So the child of whom I am writing lived on there quietly; things without thus ministering to him, as he sat daily at the window with the birdcage hanging below it, and his mother taught him to read, wondering at the ease with which he learned, and at the quickness of his memory. The perfume of the little flowers of the lime-tree fell through the air upon them like rain; while time seemed to move ever more slowly to the murmur of the bees in it, till it almost stood still on June afternoons. How insignificant, at the moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood. How indelibly, as we afterwards discover, they affect us; with what capricious attractions and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, as "with lead in the rock for ever", giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feeling and thought, which abide with us ever afterwards, thus, and not otherwise. The realities and passions, the rumours of the greater world without, steal in upon

us, each by its own special little passage-way, through the wall of custom about us; and never afterwards quite detach themselves from this or that accident, or trick, in the mode of their first entrance to us. Our susceptibilities, the discovery of our powers, manifold experiences—our various experiences of the coming and going of bodily pain, for instance—belong to this or the other well-remembered place in the material habitation—that little white room with the window across which the heavy blossoms could beat so peevishly in the wind, with just that particular catch or throb, such a sense of teasing in it, on gusty mornings; and the early habitation thus gradually becomes a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment; a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions; and irresistibly, little shapes, voices, accidents—the angle at which the sun in the morning fell on the pillow—become parts of the great chain wherewith we are bound.

Thus far, for Florian, what all this had determined was a peculiarly strong sense of home—so forcible a motive with all of us—prompting to us our customary love of the earth, and the larger part of our fear of death, that revulsion we have from it, as from something strange, untried, unfriendly; though life-long imprisonment, they tell you, and final banishment from home is a thing bitterer still; the looking forward to but a short space, a mere childish *gouter* and dessert of it, before the end, being so great a resource of effort to pilgrims and wayfarers, and the soldier in distant quarters, and lending, in lack of that, some power of solace to the thought of sleep in the home churchyard, at least—dead cheek by dead cheek, and with the rain soaking in upon one from above.

So powerful is this instinct, and yet accidents like those I have been speaking of so mechanically determine it; its essence being indeed the early familiar, as constituting our ideal, or typical conception, of rest and security. Out of so many possible conditions, just this for you and that for me, brings ever the unmistakeable realisation of the delightful *chez soi*; this for the Englishman, for me and you, with the closely-drawn white curtain and the shaded lamp; that, quite other, for the wandering Arab, who folds his tent every morning, and makes his sleeping-place among haunted ruins, or in old tombs.

With Florian then the sense of home became singularly intense, his good fortune being that the special character of his home was in itself so essentially home-like. As after many wanderings I have come to fancy that some parts of Surrey and Kent are, for Englishmen, the true landscape, true home-counties, by right, partly, of a certain earthy warmth in the yellow of the sand below their gorse-bushes, and of a certain grey-blue mist after rain, in the hollows of the hills there,

welcome to fatigued eyes, and never seen farther south; so I think that the sort of house I have described, with precisely those proportions of red-brick and green, and with a just perceptible monotony in the subdued order of it, for its distinguishing note, is for Englishmen at least typically home-life. And so for Florian that general human instinct was reinforced by this special home-likeness in the place his wandering soul had happened to light on, as, in the second degree, its body and earthly tabernacle; the sense of harmony between his soul and its physical environment became, for a time at least, like perfectly played music, and the life led there singularly tranquil and filled with a curious sense of self-possession. The love of security, of an habitually undisputed standing-ground or sleeping-place, came to count for much in the generation and correcting of his thoughts, and afterwards as a salutary principle of restraint in all his wanderings of spirit. The wistful yearning towards home, in absence from it, as the shadows of evening deepened, and he followed in thought what was doing there from hour to hour, interpreted to him much of a yearning and regret he experienced afterwards, towards he knew not what, out of strange ways of feeling and thought in which, from time to time, his spirit found itself alone; and in the tears shed in such absences there seemed always to be some soul-subduing foretaste of what his last tears might be.

And the sense of security could hardly have been deeper, the quiet of the child's soul being one with the quiet of its home, a place "inclosed" and "sealed". But upon this assured place, upon the child's assured soul which resembled it, there came floating in from the larger world without, as at windows left ajar unknowingly, or over the high garden walls, two streams of impressions, the sentiments of beauty and pain—recognitions of the visible, tangible, audible loveliness of things, as a very real and somewhat tyrannous element in them—and of the sorrow of the world, of grown people and children and animals, as a thing not to be put by in them. From this point he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form—the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely persons, modulated in such delicate unison to the things they said or sang,—marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, "the lust of the eye", as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far! Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way! In music sometimes the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people. Tears of joy too the child knew,

also to older people's surprise; real tears, once, of relief from long-strung, childish expectation, when he found returned at evening, with new roses in her cheeks, the little sister who had been to a place where there was a wood, and brought back for him a treasure of fallen acorns, and black crow's feathers, and his peace at finding her again near him mingled all night with some intimate sense of the distant forest, the rumour of its breezes, with the glossy blackbirds aslant and the branches lifted in them, and of the perfect nicety of the little cups that fell. So those two elementary apprehensions of the tenderness and of the colour in things grew apace in him, and were seen by him afterwards to send their roots back into the beginnings of life.

Let me note first some of the occasions of his recognition of the element of pain in things—incidents, now and again, which seemed suddenly to awake in him the whole force of that sentiment which Goethe has called the *Weltschmerz*, and in which the concentrated sorrow of the world seemed suddenly to lie heavy upon him. A book lay in an old book-case, of which he cared to remember one picture—a woman sitting, with hands bound behind her, the dress, the cap, the hair, folded with a simplicity which touched him strangely, as if not by her own hands, but with some ambiguous care at the hands of others—Queen Marie Antoinette, on her way to execution—we all remember David's drawing, meant merely to make her ridiculous. The face that had been so high had learned to be mute and resistless; but out of its very resistlessness, seemed now to call on men to have pity, and forbear; and he took note of that, as he closed the book, as a thing to look at again, if he should at any time find himself tempted to be cruel. Again, he would never quite forget the appeal in the small sister's face, in the garden under the lilacs, terrified at a spider lighted on her sleeve. He could trace back to the look then noted a certain mercy he conceived always for people in fear, even of little things, which seemed to make him, though but for a moment, capable of almost any sacrifice of himself. Impressible, susceptible persons, indeed, who had had their sorrows, lived about him; and this sensibility was due in part to the tacit influence of their presence, enforcing upon him habitually the fact that there are those who pass their days, as a matter of course, in a sort of "going quietly". Most poignantly of all he could recall, in unfading minutest circumstance, the cry on the stair, sounding bitterly through the house, and struck into his soul for ever, of an aged woman, his father's sister, come now to announce his death in distant India; how it seemed to make the aged woman like a child again; and, he knew not why, but this fancy was full of pity to him. There were the little sorrows of the dumb animals too—of the white angora, with a dark tail like an ermine's, and a face

like a flower, who fell into a lingering sickness, and became quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism, and came to have a hundred different expressions of voice—how it grew worse and worse, till it began to feel the light too much for it, and at last, after one wild morning of pain, the little soul flickered away from the body, quite worn to death already, and now but feebly retaining it.

So he wanted another pet; and as there were starlings about the place, which could be taught to speak, one of them was caught, and he meant to treat it kindly; but in the night its young ones could be heard crying after it, and the responsive cry of the mother-bird towards them; and at last, with the first light, though not till after some debate with himself, he went down and opened the cage, and saw a sharp bound of the prisoner up to her nestlings; and therewith came the sense of remorse,—that he too was become an accomplice in moving, to the limit of his small power, the springs and handles of that great machine in things, constructed so ingeniously to play pain-fugues on the delicate nerve-work of living creatures.

I have remarked how, in the process of our brain-building, as the house of thought in which we live gets itself together, like some airy bird's-nest of floating thistle-down and chance straws, compact at last, little accidents have their consequence; and thus it happened that, as he walked one evening, a garden gate, usually closed, stood open; and lo! within, a great red hawthorn in full flower, embossing heavily the bleached and twisted trunk and branches, so aged that there were but few green leaves thereon—a plumage of tender, crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood. The perfume of the tree had now and again reached him, in the currents of the wind, over the wall, and he had wondered what might be behind it, and was now allowed to fill his arms with the flowers—flowers enough for all the old blue-china pots along the chimney-piece, making *fête* in the children's room. Was it some periodic moment in the expansion of soul within him, or mere trick of heat in the heavily-laden summer air? But the beauty of the thing struck home to him feverishly; and in dreams all night he loitered along a magic roadway of crimson flowers, which seemed to open ruddily in thick, fresh masses about his feet, and fill softly all the little hollows in the banks on either side. Always afterwards, summer by summer, as the flowers came on, the blossom of the red hawthorn still seemed to him absolutely the reddest of all things; and the goodly crimson, still alive in the works of old Venetian masters or old Flemish tapestries, called out always from afar the recollection of the flame in those perishing little petals, as it pushed gradually out of them, kept long in the drawers of an old cabinet. Also then, for the first time, he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation

to fair outward objects, an inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free. A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him; and the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, with the coming of the gracious summer guise of fields and trees and persons in each succeeding year, of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him.

In later years he came upon philosophies which occupied him much in the estimate of the proportion of the sensuous and the ideal elements in human knowledge, the relative parts they bear in it; and, in his intellectual scheme, was led to assign very little to the abstract thought, and much to its sensible vehicle or occasion. Such metaphysical speculation did but reinforce what was instinctive in his way of receiving the world, and for him, everywhere, that sensible vehicle or occasion became, perhaps only too surely, the necessary concomitant of any perception of things, real enough to be of any weight or reckoning, in his house of thought. There were times when he could think of the necessity he was under of associating all thoughts to touch and sight, as a sympathetic link between himself and actual, feeling, living objects; a protest in favour of real men and women against mere grey, unreal abstractions; and he remembered gratefully how the Christian religion, hardly less than the religion of the ancient Greeks, translating so much of its spiritual verity into things that may be seen, condescended in part to sanction this infirmity, if so it be, of our human existence wherein the world of sense is so much with us, and welcomed this thought as a kind of keeper and sentinel over his soul therein. But certainly, he came more and more to be unable to care for, or think of soul but as in an actual body, or of any world but that wherein are water and trees, and where men and women look, so or so, and press actual hands. It was the trick even his pity learned, fastening those who suffered in anywise to his affections by a kind of sensible attachments. He would think of Julian, fallen into incurable sickness as spoiled in the sweet blossom of his skin like pale amber, and his honey-like hair; of Cecil, early dead, as cut off from the lilies, from golden summer days, from women's voices; and then what comforted him a little was the thought of the turning of the child's flesh to violet in the turf above him. And thinking of the very poor, it was not the things which most men care most for that he yearned to give them; but fairer roses, perhaps, and power to taste quite as they will at their ease and not task-burdened, a certain desirable, clear light in

the new morning, through which sometimes he had noticed them, quite unconscious of it, on their way to their early toil.

So he yielded himself to these things, to be played upon by them like a musical instrument, and began to note with deepening watchfulness, but always with some puzzled, unutterable longing in his enjoyment, the phases of the seasons and of the growing or waning day, down even to the shadowy changes wrought on bare wall or ceiling—the light cast up from the snow, bringing out their darkest angles; the brown light in the cloud, which meant rain; that almost too austere clearness, in the protracted light of the lengthening day, before warm weather began, as if it lingered but to make a severer workday, with the school-books opened earlier and later; that beam of June sunshine, at last, as he lay awake before the time, a way of gold-dust across the darkness; all the humming, the freshness, the perfume of the garden seemed to lie upon it—and coming in one afternoon in September, along the red gravel walk, to look for a basket of yellow crab-apples left in the cool, old parlour, he remembered it the more, and how the colours struck upon him, because a wasp on one bitten apple stung him, and he felt the passion of sudden, severe pain. For this too brought its curious reflexions; and, in relief from it, he would wonder over it—how it had then been with him—puzzled at the depth of the charm or spell over him, which lay, for a little while at least, in the mere absence of pain; once, especially, when an older boy taught him to make flowers of sealing-wax, and he had burnt his hand badly at the lighted taper, and been unable to sleep. He remembered that also afterwards, as a sort of typical thing—a white vision of heat about him, clinging closely, through the languid scent of the ointments put upon the place to make it well.

Also, as he felt this pressure upon him of the sensible world, then, as often afterwards, there would come another sort of curious questioning how the last impressions of eye and ear might happen to him, how they would find him—the scent of the last flower, the soft yellowness of the last morning, the last recognition of some object of affection, hand or voice; it could not be but that the latest look of the eyes, before their final closing, would be strangely vivid; one would go with the hot tears, the cry, the touch of the wistful bystander, impressed how deeply on one, or would it be, perhaps, a mere frail retiring of all things, great or little, away from one, into a level distance?

For with this desire of physical beauty mingled itself early the fear of death—the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty. Hitherto he had never gazed upon dead faces, as sometimes, afterwards, at the *Morgue* in Paris, or in that fair cemetery at Munich, where all the dead must go and lie in state before burial, behind glass windows, among

the flowers and incense and holy candles—the aged clergy with their sacred ornaments, the young men in their dancing-shoes and spotless white linen—after which visits, those waxen, resistless faces would always live with him for many days, making the broadest sunshine sickly. The child had heard indeed of the death of his father, and how, in the Indian station, a fever had taken him, so that though not in action he had yet died as a soldier; and hearing of the “resurrection of the just”, he could think of him as still abroad in the world, somehow, for his protection—a grand, though perhaps rather terrible figure, in beautiful soldier’s things, like the figure in the picture of Joshua’s Vision in the Bible—and of that, round which the mourners moved so softly, and afterwards with such solemn singing, as but a worn-out garment left at a deserted lodging. So it was, until on a summer day he walked with his mother through a fair churchyard. In a bright dress he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child—a dark space on the brilliant grass—the black mould lying heaped up round it, weighing down the little jewelled branches of the dwarf rose-bushes in flower. And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children do sometimes die, the physical horror of death, with its wholly selfish recoil from the association of lower forms of life, and the suffocating weight above. No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier’s things any longer abroad in the world for his protection! only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see. For sitting one day in the garden below an open window, he heard people talking, and could not but listen, how, in a sleepless hour, a sick woman had seen one of the dead sitting beside her, come to call her hence; and from the broken talk evolved with much clearness the notion that not all those dead people had really departed to the churchyard, nor were quite so motionless as they looked, but led a secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes, quite free by night, though sometimes visible in the day, dodging from room to room, with no great goodwill towards those who shared the place with them. All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning—an odd, irreconcilable new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence. He could have hated the dead he had pitied so, for being thus. Afterwards, he came to think of those poor, home-returning ghosts, which all men have fancied to themselves—the *revenants*—pathetically, as crying, or beating with vain hands at the doors, as the wind came, their cries distinguishable in it as a wilder inner note. But, always making death more unfamiliar still, that old

experience would ever, from time to time, return to him; even in the living he sometimes caught its likeness; at any time or place, in a moment, the faint atmosphere of the chamber of death would be breathed around him, and the image with the bound chin, the quaint smile, the straight, stiff feet, shed itself across the air upon the bright carpet, amid the gayest company, or happiest communing with himself.

To most children the sombre questionings to which impressions like these attach themselves, if they come at all, are actually suggested by religious books, which therefore they often regard with much secret distaste, and dismiss, as far as possible, from their habitual thoughts as a too depressing element in life. To Florian such impressions, these misgivings as to the ultimate tendency of the years, of the relationship between life and death, had been suggested spontaneously in the natural course of his mental growth by a strong innate sense for the soberer tones in things, further strengthened by actual circumstances; and religious sentiment, that system of biblical ideas in which he had been brought up, presented itself to him as a thing that might soften and dignify, and light up as with a "lively hope", a melancholy already deeply settled in him. So he yielded himself easily to religious impressions, and with a kind of mystical appetite for sacred things; the more as they came to him through a saintly person who loved him tenderly, and believed that this early pre-occupation with them already marked the child out for a saint. He began to love, for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belonged to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen, and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water; and its hieratic purity and simplicity became the type of something he desired always to have about him in actual life. He pored over the pictures in religious books, and knew by heart the exact mode in which the wrestling angel grasped Jacob, how Jacob looked in his mysterious sleep, how the bells and pomegranates were attached to the hem of Aaron's vestment, sounding sweetly as he glided over the turf of the holy place. His way of conceiving religion came then to be in effect what it ever afterwards remained—a sacred history indeed, but still more a sacred ideal, a transcendent version or representation, under intenser and more expressive light and shade, of human life and its familiar or exceptional incidents, birth, death, marriage, youth, age, tears, joy, rest, sleep, waking—a mirror, towards which men might turn away their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as angels, with their daily meat and drink, even, become a kind of sacred transaction—a complementary strain or burden, applied to our everyday existence, whereby the stray snatches of music in it re-set them-

selves, and fall into the scheme of some higher and more consistent harmony. A place adumbrated itself in his thoughts, wherein those sacred personalities, which are at once the reflex and the pattern of our nobler phases of life, housed themselves; and this region in his intellectual scheme all subsequent experience did but tend still further to realise and define. Some ideal, hieratic persons he would always need to occupy it and keep a warmth there. And he could hardly understand those who felt no such need at all, finding themselves quite happy without such heavenly companionship, and sacred double of their life, beside them.

Thus a constant substitution of the typical for the actual took place in his thoughts. Angels might be met by the way, under English elm or beech-tree; mere messengers seemed like angels, bound on celestial errands; a deep mysticity brooded over real meetings and partings; marriages were made in heaven; and deaths also, with hands of angels thereupon, to bear soul and body quietly asunder, each to its appointed rest. All the acts and accidents of daily life borrowed a sacred colour and significance; the very colours of things became themselves weighty with meanings like the sacred stuffs of Moses' tabernacle, full of penitence or peace. Sentiment, congruous in the first instance only with those divine transactions, the deep, effusive unction of the House of Bethany, was assumed as the due attitude for the reception of our every-day existence; and for a time he walked through the world in a sustained, not unpleasurable awe, generated by the habitual recognition, beside every circumstance and event of life, of its celestial correspondent.

Sensibility—the desire of physical beauty—a strange biblical awe, which made any reference to the unseen act on him like solemn music—these qualities the child took away with him, when, at about the age of twelve years, he left the old house, and was taken to live in another place. He had never left home before, and, anticipating much from this change, had long dreamed over it, jealously counting the days till the time fixed for departure should come; had been a little careless about others even, in his strong desire for it—when Lewis fell sick, for instance, and they must wait still two days longer. At last the morning came, very fine; and all things—the very pavement with its dust, at the roadside—seemed to have a white, pearl-like lustre in them. They were to travel by a favourite road on which he had often walked a certain distance, and on one of those two prisoner days, when Lewis was sick, had walked farther than ever before, in his great desire to reach the new place. They had started and gone a little way when a pet bird was found to have been left behind, and must even now—so it presented itself to him—have already all the

appealing fierceness and wild self-pity at heart of one left by others to perish of hunger in a closed house; and he returned to fetch it, himself in hardly less stormy distress. But as he passed in search of it from room to room, lying so pale, with a look of meekness in their denudation, and at last through that little, stripped white room, the aspect of the place touched him like the face of one dead; and a clinging back towards it came over him, so intense that he knew it would last long, and spoiling all his pleasure in the realisation of a thing so eagerly anticipated. And so, with the bird found, but himself in an agony of homesickness, thus capriciously sprung up within him, he was driven quickly away, far into the rural distance, so fondly speculated on, of that favourite country-road.

PREFACE TO *THE RENAISSANCE*

MANY attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in æsthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly. The objects with which æsthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the æsthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realise such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The æsthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has

to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain by analysing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, *La Gioconda*, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola, are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the æsthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve:—*De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.*

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always:—In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."

Often it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all *débris*, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallised a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the Stanzas on *Resolution and Independence*, or the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood*, sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly

search through and transmute, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and colour and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the *virtue*, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.

The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the *Renaissance*, and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its qualities already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of Joachim du Bellay are in many ways the most perfect illustration. The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence, just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascêsis*, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies,—in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound æsthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting-

points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:—It is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

I have added an essay on Winckelmann, as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his life-long struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of a previous century. He is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.

ENGLAND

WORDSWORTH

CHARLES LAMB

AESTHETIC POETRY

CONCLUSION TO "*THE RENAISSANCE*"

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

WORDSWORTH

SOME English critics at the beginning of the present century had a great deal to say concerning a distinction, of much importance, as they thought, in the true estimate of poetry, between the *Fancy*, and another more powerful faculty—the *Imagination*. This metaphysical distinction, borrowed originally from the writings of German philosophers, and perhaps not always clearly apprehended by those who talked of it, involved a far deeper and more vital distinction, with which indeed all true criticism more or less directly has to do, the distinction, namely, between higher and lower degrees of intensity in the poet's perception of his subject, and in his concentration of himself upon his work. Of those who dwelt upon the metaphysical distinction between the *Fancy* and the *Imagination*, it was Wordsworth who made the most of it, assuming it as the basis for the final classification of his poetical writings; and it is in these writings that the deeper and more vital distinction, which, as I have said, underlies the metaphysical distinction, is most needed, and may best be illustrated.

For nowhere is there so perplexed a mixture as in Wordsworth's own poetry, of work touched with intense and individual power, with work of almost no character at all. He has much conventional sentiment, and some of that insincere poetic diction, against which his most serious critical efforts were directed: the reaction in his political ideas, consequent on the excesses of 1795, makes him, at times, a mere declaimer on moral and social topics; and he seems, sometimes, to force an unwilling pen, and write by rule. By making the most of these blemishes it is possible to obscure the true æsthetic value of his work, just as his life also, a life of much quiet delicacy and independence, might easily be placed in a false focus, and made to appear a somewhat tame theme in illustration of the more obvious parochial virtues. And those who wish to understand his influence, and experience his peculiar savour, must bear with patience the presence of an alien element in Wordsworth's work, which never coalesced with what is really delightful in it, nor underwent his special power. Who that values his writings most has not felt the intrusion there, from time to time, of something tedious and prosaic? Of all poets equally great, he would gain most by a skilfully made anthology. Such a selection would show, in truth, not so much what he was,

or to himself or others seemed to be, as what, by the more energetic and fertile quality in his writings, he was ever tending to become. And the mixture in his work, as it actually stands, is so perplexed, that one fears to miss the least promising composition even, lest some precious morsel should be lying hidden within—the few perfect lines, the phrase, the single word perhaps, to which he often works up mechanically through a poem, almost the whole of which may be tame enough. He who thought that in all creative work the larger part was *given* passively, to the recipient mind, who waited so dutifully upon the gift, to whom so large a measure was sometimes given, had his times also of desertion and relapse; and he has permitted the impress of these too to remain in his work. And this duality there—the fitfulness with which the higher qualities manifest themselves in it, gives the effect in his poetry of a power not altogether his own, or under his control, which comes and goes when it will, lifting or lowering a matter, poor in itself; so that that old fancy which made the poet's art an enthusiasm, a form of divine possession, seems almost literally true of him.

This constant suggestion of an absolute duality between higher and lower moods, and the work done in them, stimulating one always to look below the surface, makes the reading of Wordsworth an excellent sort of training towards the things of art and poetry. It begets in those, who, coming across him in youth, can bear him at all, a habit of reading between the lines, a faith in the effect of concentration and collectedness of mind in the right appreciation of poetry, an expectation of things, in this order, coming to one by means of a right discipline of the temper as well as of the intellect. He meets us with the promise that he has much, and something very peculiar, to give us, if we will follow a certain difficult way, and seems to have the secret of a special and privileged state of mind. And those who have undergone his influence, and followed this difficult way, are like people who have passed through some initiation, a *disciplina arcani*, by submitting to which they become able constantly to distinguish in art, speech, feeling, manners, that which is organic, animated, expressive, from that which is only conventional, derivative, inexpressive.

But although the necessity of selecting these precious morsels for oneself is an opportunity for the exercise of Wordsworth's peculiar influence, and induces a kind of just criticism and true estimate of it, yet the purely literary product would have been more excellent, had the writer himself purged away that alien element. How perfect would have been the little treasury, shut between the covers of how thin a book! Let us suppose the desired separation made, the electric thread untwined, the golden pieces, great and small, lying apart

together.* What are the peculiarities of this residue? What special sense does Wordsworth exercise, and what instincts does he satisfy? What are the subjects and the motives which in him excite the imaginative faculty? What are the qualities in things and persons which he values, the impression and sense of which he can convey to others, in an extraordinary way?

An intimate consciousness of the expression of natural things, which weighs, listens, penetrates, where the earlier mind passed roughly by, is a large element in the complexion of modern poetry. It has been remarked as a fact in mental history again and again. It reveals itself in many forms; but is strongest and most attractive in what is strongest and most attractive in modern literature. It is exemplified, almost equally, by writers as unlike each other as Senancour and Théophile Gautier: as a singular chapter in the history of the human mind, its growth might be traced from Rousseau to Chateaubriand, from Chateaubriand to Victor Hugo: it has doubtless some latent connexion with those pantheistic theories which locate an intelligent soul in material things, and have largely exercised men's minds in some modern systems of philosophy: it is traceable even in the graver writings of historians: it makes as much difference between ancient and modern landscape art, as there is between the rough masks of an early mosaic and a portrait by Reynolds or Gainsborough. Of this new sense, the writings of Wordsworth are the central and elementary expression: he is more simply and entirely occupied with it than any other poet, though there are fine expressions of precisely the same thing in so different a poet as Shelley. There was in his own character a certain contentment, a sort of inborn religious placidity, seldom found united with a sensibility so mobile as his, which was favourable to the quiet, habitual observation of inanimate, or imperfectly animate, existence. His life of eighty years is divided by no very profoundly felt incidents: its changes are almost wholly inward, and it falls into broad, untroubled, perhaps somewhat monotonous spaces. What it most resembles is the life of one of those early Italian or Flemish painters, who, just because their minds were full of heavenly visions, passed, some of them, the better part of sixty years in quiet, systematic industry. This placid life matured a quite unusual sensibility, really innate in him, to the sights and sounds of the natural world—the flower and its shadow on the stone, the cuckoo and its echo. The poem of *Resolution and Independence* is a storehouse of such records: for its fulness of imagery it may be compared to Keats's *Saint Agnes' Eve*.

* Since this essay was written, such selections have been made, with excellent taste, by Matthew Arnold and Professor Knight. [W.P.]

To read one of his longer pastoral poems for the first time, is like a day spent in a new country: the memory is crowded for a while with its precise and vivid incidents—

“The pliant harebell swinging in the breeze
On some grey rock”;—

“The single sheep and the one blasted tree
And the bleak music from that old stone wall”;—

“In the meadows and the lower ground
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn”;—

“And that green corn all day is rustling in thine ears.”

Clear and delicate at once, as he is in the outlining of visible imagery, he is more clear and delicate still, and finely scrupulous, in the noting of sounds; so that he conceives of noble sound as even moulding the human countenance to nobler types, and as something actually “profaned” by colour, by visible form, or image. He has a power likewise of realising, and conveying to the consciousness of the reader, abstract and elementary impressions—silence, darkness, absolute motionlessness: or, again, the whole complex sentiment of a particular place, the abstract expression of desolation in the long white road, of peacefulness in a particular folding of the hills. In the airy building of the brain, a special day or hour even, comes to have for him a sort of personal identity, a spirit or angel given to it, by which, for its exceptional insight, or the happy light upon it, it has a presence in one’s history, and acts there, as a separate power or accomplishment; and he has celebrated in many of his poems the “efficacious spirit”, which, as he says, resides in these “particular spots” of time.

It is to such a world, and to a world of congruous meditation thereon, that we see him retiring in his but lately published poem of *The Recluse*—taking leave, without much count of costs, of the world of business, of action and ambition, as also of all that for the majority of mankind counts as sensuous enjoyment.*

* In Wordsworth’s prefatory advertisement to the first edition of *The Prelude*, published in 1850, it is stated that that work was intended to be introductory to *The Recluse*; and that *The Recluse*, if completed, would have consisted of three parts. The second part is “The Excursion”. The third part was only planned; but the first book of the first part was left in manuscript by Wordsworth—though in manuscript, it is said, in no great condition of forwardness for the printers. This book, now for the first time printed *in extenso* (a very noble passage from it found place in that prose advertisement to *The Excursion*), is included in the latest edition of Wordsworth by Mr. John Morley. It was

And so it came about that this sense of a life in natural objects, which in most poetry is but a rhetorical artifice, is with Wordsworth the assertion of what for him is almost literal fact. To him every natural object seemed to possess more or less of a moral or spiritual life, to be capable of a companionship with man, full of expression, of inexplicable affinities and delicacies of intercourse. An emanation, a particular spirit, belonged, not to the moving leaves or water only, but to the distant peak of the hills arising suddenly, by some change of perspective, above the nearer horizon, to the passing space of light across the plain, to the lichened Druidic stone even, for a certain weird fellowship in it with the moods of men. It was like a "survival", in the peculiar intellectual temperament of a man of letters at the end of the eighteenth century, of that primitive condition, which some philosophers have traced in the general history of human culture, wherein all outward objects alike, including even the works of men's hands, were believed to be endowed with animation, and the world was "full of souls"—that mood in which the old Greek gods were first begotten, and which had many strange aftergrowths.

In the early ages, this belief, delightful as its effects on poetry often are, was but the result of a crude intelligence. But, in Wordsworth, such power of seeing life, such perception of a soul, in inanimate things, came of an exceptional susceptibility to the impressions of eye

well worth adding to the poet's great bequest to English literature. A true student of his work, who has formulated for himself what he supposes to be the leading characteristics of Wordsworth's genius, will feel, we think, lively interest in testing them by the various fine passages in what is here presented for the first time. Let the following serve for a sample:—

'Thickers full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude and silence in the sky:—
'These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth
Have also these, but nowhere else is found,
Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found
'The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,
By night, here only; or in chosen minds
'That take it with them hence, where'er they go.
—'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A centre, come from whereso'er you will,
A whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect contentment, Unity entire. [W.P.]

and ear, and was, in its essence, a kind of sensuousness. At least, it is only in a temperament exceptionally susceptible on the sensuous side, that this sense of the expressiveness of outward things comes to be so large a part of life. That he awakened "a sort of thought in sense", is Shelley's just estimate of this element in Wordsworth's poetry.

And it was through nature, thus ennobled by a semblance of passion and thought, that he approached the spectacle of human life. Human life, indeed, is for him, at first, only an additional, accidental grace of an expressive landscape. When he thought of man, it was of man as in the presence and under the influence of these effective natural objects, and linked to them by many associations. The close connexion of man with natural objects, the habitual association of his thoughts and feelings with a particular spot of earth, has sometimes seemed to degrade those who are subject to its influence, as if it did but reinforce that physical connexion of our nature with the actual lime and clay of the soil, which is always drawing us nearer to our end. But for Wordsworth, these influences tended to the dignity of human nature, because they tended to tranquillise it. By raising nature to the level of human thought he gives it power and expression: he subdues man to the level of nature, and gives him thereby a certain breadth and coolness and solemnity. The leech-gatherer on the moor, the woman "stepping westward", are for him natural objects, almost in the same sense as the aged thorn, or the lichened rock on the heath. In this sense the leader of the "Lake School", in spite of an earnest pre-occupation with man, his thoughts, his destiny, is the poet of nature. And of nature, after all, in its modesty. The English lake country has, of course, its grandeurs. But the peculiar function of Wordsworth's genius, as carrying in it a power to open out the soul of apparently little or familiar things, would have found its true test had he become the poet of Surrey, say! and the prophet of its life. The glories of Italy and Switzerland, though he did write a little about them, had too potent a material life of their own to serve greatly his poetic purpose.

Religious sentiment, consecrating the affections and natural regrets of the human heart, above all, that pitiful awe and care for the perishing human clay, of which relic-worship is but the corruption, has always had much to do with localities, with the thoughts which attach themselves to actual scenes and places. Now what is true of it everywhere, is truest of it in those secluded valleys where one generation after another maintains the same abiding-place; and it was on this side, that Wordsworth apprehended religion most strongly. Consisting, as it did so much, in the recognition of local sanctities, in the habit of

connecting the stones and trees of a particular spot of earth with the great events of life, till the low walls, the green mounds, the half-obliterated epitaphs seemed full of voices, and a sort of natural oracles, the very religion of these people of the dales appeared but as another link between them and the earth, and was literally a religion of nature. It tranquillised them by bringing them under the placid rule of traditional and narrowly localised observances. "Grave livers," they seemed to him, under this aspect, with stately speech, and something of that natural dignity of manners, which underlies the highest courtesy.

And, seeing man thus as a part of nature, elevated and solemnised in proportion as his daily life and occupations brought him into companionship with permanent natural objects, his very religion forming new links for him with the narrow limits of the valley, the low vaults of his church, the rough stones of his home, made intense for him now with profound sentiment, Wordsworth was able to appreciate passion in the lowly. He chooses to depict people from humble life, because, being nearer to nature than others, they are on the whole more impassioned, certainly more direct in their expression of passion, than other men: it is for this direct expression of passion, that he values their humble words. In much that he said in exaltation of rural life, he was but pleading indirectly for that sincerity, that perfect fidelity to one's own inward presentations, to the precise features of the picture within, without which any profound poetry is impossible. It was not for their tameness, but for this passionate sincerity, that he chose incidents and situations from common life, "related in a selection of language really used by men". He constantly endeavours to bring his language near to the real language of men: to the real language of men, however, not on the dead level of their ordinary intercourse, but in select moments of vivid sensation, when this language is winnowed and ennobled by excitement. There are poets who have chosen rural life as their subject, for the sake of its passionless repose, and times when Wordsworth himself extols the mere calm and dispassionate survey of things as the highest aim of poetical culture. But it was not for such passionless calm that he preferred the scenes of pastoral life; and the meditative poet, sheltering himself, as it might seem, from the agitations of the outward world, is in reality only clearing the scene for the great exhibitions of emotion, and what he values most is the almost elementary expression of elementary feelings.

And so he has much for those who value highly the concentrated presentment of passion, who appraise men and women by their susceptibility to it, and art and poetry as they afford the spectacle of it.

Breaking from time to time into the pensive spectacle of their daily toil, their occupations near to nature, come those great elementary feelings, lifting and solemnising their language and giving it a natural music. The great, distinguishing passion came to Michael by the sheepfold, to Ruth by the wayside, adding these humble children of the furrow to the true aristocracy of passionate souls. In this respect, Wordsworth's work resembles most that of George Sand, in those of her novels which depict country life. With a penetrative pathos, which puts him in the same rank with the masters of the sentiment of pity in literature, with Meinhold and Victor Hugo, he collects all the traces of vivid excitement which were to be found in that pastoral world—the girl who rung her father's knell; the unborn infant feeling about its mother's heart; the instinctive touches of children; the sorrows of the wild creatures, even—their home-sickness, their strange yearnings; the tales of passionate regret that hang by a ruined farm-building, a heap of stones, a deserted sheepfold; that gay, false, adventurous, outer world, which breaks in from time to time to bewilder and deflower these quiet homes; not "passionate sorrow" only, for the overthrow of the soul's beauty, but the loss of, or carelessness for personal beauty even in those whom men have wronged—their pathetic wanness; the sailor "who, in his heart, was half a shepherd on the stormy seas"; the wild woman teaching her child to pray for her betrayer; incidents like the making of the shepherd's staff, or that of the young boy laying the first stone of the sheepfold;—all the pathetic episodes of their humble existence, their longing, their wonder at fortune, their poor pathetic pleasures, like the pleasures of children, won so hardly in the struggle for bare existence; their yearning towards each other, in their darkened houses, or at their early toil. A sort of biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange, new, passionate, pastoral world, of which he first raised the image, and the reflection of which some of our best modern fiction has caught from him.

He pondered much over the philosophy of his poetry, and reading deeply in the history of his own mind, seems at times to have passed the borders of a world of strange speculations, inconsistent enough, had he cared to note such inconsistencies, with those traditional beliefs, which were otherwise the object of his devout acceptance. Thinking of the high value he set upon customariness, upon all that is habitual, local, rooted in the ground, in matters of religious sentiment, you might sometimes regard him as one tethered down to a world, refined and peaceful indeed, but with no broad outlook, a world protected, but somewhat narrowed, by the influence of received ideas. But he is at times also something very different from this, and

something much bolder. A chance expression is overheard and placed in a new connexion, the sudden memory of a thing long past occurs to him, a distant object is relieved for a while by a random gleam of light—accidents turning up for a moment what lies below the surface of our immediate experience—and he passes from the humble graves and lowly arches of “the little rock-like pile” of a Westmoreland church, on bold trains of speculative thought, and comes, from point to point, into strange contact with thoughts which have visited, from time to time, far more venturesome, perhaps errant, spirits.

He had pondered deeply, for instance, on those strange reminiscences and forebodings, which seem to make our lives stretch before and behind us, beyond where we can see or touch anything, or trace the lines of connexion. Following the soul, backwards and forwards, on these endless ways, his sense of man’s dim, potential powers became a pledge to him, indeed, of a future life, but carried him back also to that mysterious notion of an earlier state of existence—the fancy of the Platonists—the old heresy of Origen. It was in this mood that he conceived those oft-reiterated regrets for a half-ideal childhood, when the relics of Paradise still clung about the soul—a childhood, as it seemed, full of the fruits of old age, lost for all, in a degree, in the passing away of the youth of the world, lost for each one, over again, in the passing away of actual youth. It is this ideal childhood which he celebrates in his famous *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood*, and some other poems which may be grouped around it, such as the lines on *Tintern Abbey*, and something like what he describes was actually truer of himself than he seems to have understood; for his own most delightful poems were really the instinctive productions of earlier life, and most surely for him, “the first diviner influence of this world” passed away, more and more completely, in his contact with experience.

Sometimes as he dwelt upon those moments of profound, imaginative power, in which the outward object appears to take colour and expression, a new nature almost, from the prompting of the observant mind, the actual world would, as it were, dissolve and detach itself, flake by flake, and he himself seemed to be the creator, and when he would the destroyer, of the world in which he lived—that old isolating thought of many a brain-sick mystic of ancient and modern times.

At other times, again, in those periods of intense susceptibility, in which he appeared to himself as but the passive recipient of external influences, he was attracted by the thought of a spirit of life in outward things, a single, all-pervading mind in them, of which man, and even the poet’s imaginative energy, are but moments—that old dream of the *anima mundi*, the mother of all things and their grave, in which

some had desired to lose themselves, and others had become indifferent to the distinctions of good and evil. It would come, sometimes, like the sign of the *macrocosm* to Faust in his cell: the network of man and nature was seen to be pervaded by a common, universal life: a new, bold thought lifted him above the furrow, above the green turf of the Westmoreland churchyard, to a world altogether different in its vagueness and vastness, and the narrow glen was full of the brooding power of one universal spirit.

And so he has something, also, for those who feel the fascination of bold speculative ideas, who are really capable of rising upon them to conditions of poetical thought. He uses them, indeed, always with very fine apprehension of the limits within which alone philosophical imaginings have any place in true poetry; and using them only for poetical purposes, is not too careful even to make them consistent with each other. To him, theories which for other men bring a world of technical diction, brought perfect form and expression, as in those two lofty books of the *Prelude*, which describe the decay and the restoration of Imagination and Taste. Skirting the borders of this world of bewildering heights and depths, he got but the first exciting influence of it, that joyful enthusiasm which great imaginative theories prompt, when the mind first comes to have an understanding of them; and it is not under the influence of these thoughts that his poetry becomes tedious or loses its blitheness. He keeps them, too, always within certain ethical bounds, so that no word of his could offend the simplest of those simple souls which are always the largest portion of mankind. But it is, nevertheless, the contact of these thoughts, the speculative boldness in them, which constitutes, at least for some minds, the secret attraction of much of his best poetry—the sudden passage from lowly thoughts and places to the majestic forms of philosophical imagination, the play of these forms over a world so different, enlarging so strangely the bounds of its humble churchyards, and breaking such a wild light on the graves of christened children.

And these moods always brought with them faultless expression. In regard to expression, as with feeling and thought, the duality of the higher and lower moods was absolute. It belonged to the higher, the imaginative mood, and was the pledge of its reality, to bring the appropriate language with it. In him, when the really poetical motive worked at all, it united, with absolute justice, the word and the idea; each, in the imaginative flame, becoming inseparably one with the other, by that fusion of matter and form, which is the characteristic of the highest poetical expression. His words are themselves thought and feeling; not

eloquent, or musical words merely, but that sort of creative language which carries the reality of what it depicts, directly, to the consciousness.

The music of mere metre performs but a limited, yet a very peculiar and subtly ascertained function, in Wordsworth's poetry. With him, metre is but an additional grace, accessory to that deeper music of words and sounds, that moving power, which they exercise in the nobler prose no less than in formal poetry. It is a sedative to that excitement, an excitement sometimes almost painful, under which the language, alike of poetry and prose, attains a rhythmical power, independent of metrical combination, and dependent rather on some subtle adjustment of the elementary sounds of words themselves to the image or feeling they convey. Yet some of his pieces, pieces prompted by a sort of half-playful mysticism, like the *Daffodils* and *The Two April Mornings*, are distinguished by a certain quaint gaiety of metre, and rival by their perfect execution, in this respect, similar pieces among our own Elizabethan, or contemporary French poetry. And those who take up these poems after an interval of months, or years perhaps, may be surprised at finding how well old favourites wear, how their strange, inventive turns of diction or thought still send through them the old feeling of surprise. Those who lived about Wordsworth were all great lovers of the older English literature, and oftentimes there came out in him a noticeable likeness to our earlier poets. He quotes unconsciously, but with new power of meaning, a clause from one of Shakespeare's sonnets; and, as with some other men's most famous work, the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood* had its anticipator.* He drew something too from the unconscious mysticism of the old English language itself, drawing out the inward significance of its racy idiom, and the not wholly unconscious poetry of the language used by the simplest people under strong excitement—language, therefore, at its origin.

The office of the poet is not that of the moralist, and the first aim of Wordsworth's poetry is to give the reader a peculiar kind of pleasure. But through his poetry, and through this pleasure in it, he does actually convey to the reader an extraordinary wisdom in the things of practice. One lesson, if men must have lessons, he conveys more clearly than all, the supreme importance of contemplation in the conduct of life.

Contemplation—impassioned contemplation—that is with Wordsworth the end-in-itself, the perfect end. We see the majority of mankind going most often to definite ends, lower or higher ends, as their own instincts may determine; but the end may never be attained, and

* Henry Vaughan in *The Retreat*. [W.P.]

the means not be quite the right means, great ends and little ones alike being, for the most part, distant, and the ways to them, in this dim world, somewhat vague. Meantime, to higher or lower ends, they move too often with something of a sad countenance, with hurried and ignoble gait, becoming, unconsciously, something like thorns, in their anxiety to bear grapes; it being possible for people, in the pursuit of even great ends, to become themselves thin and impoverished in spirit and temper, thus diminishing the sum of perfection in the world, at its very sources. We understand this when it is a question of mean, or of intensely selfish ends—of Grandet, or Javert. We think it bad morality to say that the end justifies the means, and we know how false to all higher conceptions of the religious life is the type of one who is ready to do evil that good may come. We contrast with such dark, mistaken eagerness, a type like that of Saint Catherine of Siena, who made the means to her ends so attractive, that she has won for herself an undying place in the *House Beautiful*, not by her rectitude of soul only, but by its “fairness”—by those quite different qualities which commend themselves to the poet and the artist.

Yet, for most of us, the conception of means and ends covers the whole of life, and is the exclusive type or figure under which we represent our lives to ourselves. Such a figure, reducing all things to machinery, though it has on its side the authority of that old Greek moralist who has fixed for succeeding generations the outline of the theory of right living, is too like a mere picture or description of men's lives as we actually find them, to be the basis of the higher ethics. It covers the meanness of men's daily lives, and much of the dexterity and the vigour with which they pursue what may seem to them the good of themselves or of others; but not the intangible perfection of those whose ideal is rather in *being* than in *doing*—not those *manners* which are, in the deepest as in the simplest sense, *morals*, and without which one cannot so much as offer a cup of water to a poor man without offence—not the part of “antique Rachel”, sitting in the company of Beatrice; and even the moralist might well endeavour rather to withdraw men from the too exclusive consideration of means and ends, in life.

Against this predominance of machinery in our existence, Wordsworth's poetry, like all great art and poetry, is a continual protest. Justify rather the end by the means, it seems to say: whatever may become of the fruit, make sure of the flowers and the leaves. It was justly said, therefore, by one who had meditated very profoundly on the true relation of means to ends in life, and on the distinction between what is desirable in itself and what is desirable only as

machinery, that when the battle which he and his friends were waging had been won, the world would need more than ever those qualities which Wordsworth was keeping alive and nourishing.*

That the end of life is not action but contemplation—*being* as distinct from *doing*—a certain disposition of the mind: is, in some shape or other, the principle of all the higher morality. In poetry, in art, if you enter into their true spirit at all, you touch this principle, in a measure: these, by their very sterility, are a type of beholding for the mere joy of beholding. To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry. Wordsworth, and other poets who have been like him in ancient or more recent times, are the masters, the experts, in this art of impassioned contemplation. Their work is, not to teach lessons, or enforce rules, or even to stimulate us to noble ends; but to withdraw the thoughts for a little while from the mere machinery of life, to fix them, with appropriate emotions, on the spectacle of those great facts in man's existence which no machinery affects, "on the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature,"—on "the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe, on storm and sunshine, on the revolutions of the seasons, on cold and heat, on loss of friends and kindred, on injuries and resentments, on gratitude and hope, on fear and sorrow." To witness this spectacle with appropriate emotions is the aim of all culture; and of these emotions poetry like Wordsworth's is a great nourisher and stimulant. He sees nature full of sentiment and excitement; he sees men and women as parts of nature, passionate, excited, in strange grouping and connexion, with the grandeur and beauty of the natural world:—images, in his own words, "of man suffering, amid awful forms and powers".

Such is the figure of the more powerful and original poet, hidden away, in part, under those weaker elements in Wordsworth's poetry, which for some minds determine their entire character; a poet somewhat bolder and more passionate than might at first sight be supposed, but not too bold for true poetical taste; an unimpassioned writer, you might sometimes fancy, yet thinking the chief aim, in life and art alike, to be a certain deep emotion; seeking most often the great elementary passions in lowly places; having at least this condition of all impassioned work, that he aims always at an absolute sincerity of feeling and diction, so that he is the true forerunner

* See an interesting paper, by Mr. John Morley, on "The Death of Mr. Mill", *Fortnightly Review*, June 1873. [W.P.]

of the deepest and most passionate poetry of our own day; yet going back also, with something of a protest against the conventional fervour of much of the poetry popular in his own time, to those older English poets, whose unconscious likeness often comes out in him.

CHARLES LAMB

THOSE English critics who at the beginning of the present century introduced from Germany, together with some other subtleties of thought transplanted hither not without advantage, the distinction between the *Fancy* and the *Imagination*, made much also of the cognate distinction between *Wit* and *Humour*, between that unreal and transitory mirth, which is as the crackling of thorns under the pot, and the laughter which blends with tears and even with the sublimities of the imagination, and which, in its most exquisite motives, is one with pity—the laughter of the comedies of Shakespeare, hardly less expressive than his moods of seriousness or solemnity, of that deeply stirred soul of sympathy in him, as flowing from which both tears and laughter are alike genuine and contagious.

This distinction between wit and humour, Coleridge and other kindred critics applied, with much effect, in their studies of some of our older English writers. And as the distinction between imagination and fancy, made popular by Wordsworth, found its best justification in certain essential differences of stuff in Wordsworth's own writings, so this other critical distinction, between wit and humour, finds a sort of visible interpretation and instance in the character and writings of Charles Lamb;—one who lived more consistently than most writers among subtle literary theories, and whose remains are still full of curious interest for the student of literature as a fine art.

The author of the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, coming to the humourists of the nineteenth, would have found, as is true pre-eminently of Thackeray himself, the springs of pity in them deepened by the deeper subjectivity, the intenser and closer living with itself, which is characteristic of the temper of the later generation; and therewith, the mirth also, from the amalgam of which with pity humour proceeds, has become, in Charles Dickens, for example, freer and more boisterous.

To this more high-pitched feeling, since predominant in our literature, the writings of Charles Lamb, whose life occupies the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth, are a transition; and such union of grave, of terrible even, with gay, we may note in the circumstances of his life, as reflected thence into his work. We catch the aroma of a singular, homely sweetness about his first years, spent on 'Thames' side, amid the red bricks and terraced

gardens, with their rich historical memories of old-fashioned legal London. Just above the poorer class, deprived, as he says, of the "sweet food of academic institution", he is fortunate enough to be reared in the classical languages at an ancient school, where he becomes the companion of Coleridge, as at a later period he was his enthusiastic disciple. So far, the years go by with less than the usual share of boyish difficulties; protected, one fancies, seeing what he was afterwards, by some attraction of temper in the quaint child, small and delicate, with a certain Jewish expression in his clear, brown complexion, eyes not precisely of the same colour, and a slow walk adding to the staidness of his figure; and whose infirmity of speech, increased by agitation, is partly engaging.

And the cheerfulness of all this, of the mere aspect of Lamb's quiet subsequent life also, might make the more superficial reader think of him as in himself something slight, and of his mirth as cheaply bought. Yet we know that beneath this blithe surface there was something of the fateful domestic horror, of the beautiful heroism and devotedness too, of old Greek tragedy. His sister Mary, ten years his senior, in a sudden paroxysm of madness, caused the death of her mother, and was brought to trial for what an overstrained justice might have construed as the greatest of crimes. She was released on the brother's pledging himself to watch over her; and to this sister, from the age of twenty-one, Charles Lamb sacrificed himself, "seeking thenceforth," says his earliest biographer, "no connexion which could interfere with her supremacy in his affections, or impair his ability to sustain and comfort her." The "feverish, romantic ties of love", he cast away in exchange for the "charities of home". Only, from time to time, the madness returned, affecting him too, once; and we see the brother and sister voluntarily yielding to restraint. In estimating the humour of *Elia*, we must no more forget the strong undercurrent of this great misfortune and pity, than one could forget it in his actual story. So he becomes the best critic, almost the discoverer, of Webster, a dramatist of genius so sombre, so heavily coloured, so *macabre*. *Rosamund Grey*, written in his twenty-third year, a story with something bitter and exaggerated, an almost insane fixedness of gloom perceptible in it, strikes clearly this note in his work.

For himself, and from his own point of view, the exercise of his gift, of his literary art, came to gild or sweeten a life of monotonous labour, and seemed, as far as regarded others, no very important thing; availing to give them a little pleasure, and inform them a little, chiefly in a retrospective manner, but in no way concerned with the turning of the tides of the great world. And yet this very modesty, this unambitious way of conceiving his work, has impressed upon it a certain

exceptional enduringness. For of the remarkable English writers contemporary with Lamb, many were greatly preoccupied with ideas of practice—religious, moral, political—ideas which have since, in some sense or other, entered permanently into the general consciousness; and, these having no longer any stimulus for a generation provided with a different stock of ideas, the writings of those who spent so much of themselves in their propagation have lost, with posterity, something of what they gained by them in immediate influence. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley even—sharing so largely in the unrest of their own age, and made personally more interesting thereby, yet, of their actual work, surrender more to the mere course of time than some of those who may have seemed to exercise themselves hardly at all in great matters, to have been little serious, or a little indifferent, regarding them.

Of this number of the disinterested servants of literature, smaller in England than in France, Charles Lamb is one. In the making of prose he realises the principle of art for its own sake, as completely as Keats in the making of verse. And, working ever close to the concrete, to the details, great or small, of actual things, books, persons, and with no part of them blurred to his vision by the intervention of mere abstract theories, he has reached an enduring moral effect also, in a sort of boundless sympathy. Unoccupied, as he might seem, with great matters, he is in immediate contact with what is real, especially in its caressing littleness, that littleness in which there is much of the whole woeful heart of things, and meets it more than half-way with a perfect understanding of it. What sudden, unexpected touches of pathos in him!—bearing witness how the sorrow of humanity, the *Welt-schmerz*, the constant aching of its wounds, is ever present with him: but what a gift also for the enjoyment of life in its subtleties, of enjoyment actually refined by the need of some thoughtful economies and making the most of things! Little arts of happiness he is ready to teach to others. The quaint remarks of children which another would scarcely have heard, he preserves—little flies in the priceless amber of his Attic wit—and has his “Praise of chimney-sweepers” (as William Blake has written, with so much natural pathos, the Chimney-sweeper’s Song) valuing carefully their white teeth, and fine enjoyment of white sheets in stolen sleep at Arundel Castle, as he tells the story, anticipating something of the mood of our deep humourists of the last generation. His simple mother-pity for those who suffer by accident, or unkindness of nature, blindness for instance, or fateful disease of mind like his sister’s, has something primitive in its largeness; and on behalf of ill-used animals he is early in composing a *Pity’s Gift*.

And if, in deeper or more superficial sense, the dead *do* care at all for their name and fame, then how must the souls of Shakespeare and Webster have been stirred, after so long converse with things that stopped their ears, whether above or below the soil, at his exquisite appreciations of them; the souls of Titian and of Hogarth too; for, what has not been observed so generally as the excellence of his literary criticism, Charles Lamb is a fine critic of painting also. It was as loyal, self-forgetful work for others, for Shakespeare's self first, for instance, and then for Shakespeare's readers, that that too was done: he has the true scholar's way of forgetting himself in his subject. For though "defrauded", as we saw, in his young years, "of the sweet food of academic institution", he is yet essentially a scholar, and all his work mainly retrospective, as I said; his own sorrows, affections, perceptions, being alone real to him of the present. "I cannot make these present times," he says once, "present to *me*."

Above all, he becomes not merely an expositor, permanently valuable, but for Englishmen almost the discoverer of the old English drama. "The book is such as I am glad there should be," he modestly says of the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare*; to which, however, he adds in a series of notes the very quintessence of criticism, the choicest savour and perfume of Elizabethan poetry being sorted, and stored here, with a sort of delicate intellectual epicureanism, which has had the effect of winning for these, then almost forgotten, poets, one generation after another of enthusiastic students. Could he but have known how fresh a source of culture he was evoking there for other generations, through all those years in which, a little wistfully, he would harp on the limitation of his time by business, and sigh for a better fortune in regard to literary opportunities!

To feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist, the literary charm of Burton, for instance, or Quarles, or the Duchess of Newcastle; and then to interpret that charm, to convey it to others—he seeming to himself but to hand on to others, in mere humble ministration, that of which for them he is really the creator—this is the way of his criticism; cast off in a stray letter often, or passing note, or lightest essay or conversation. It is in such a letter, for instance, that we come upon a singularly penetrative estimate of the genius and writings of Defoe.

Tracking, with an attention always alert, the whole process of their production to its starting-point in the deep places of the mind, he seems to realise the but half-conscious intuitions of Hogarth or Shakespeare, and develops the great ruling unities which have swayed their actual work; or "puts up", and takes, the one morsel of good

stuff in an old, forgotten writer. Even in what he says casually there comes an aroma of old English; noticeable echoes, in chance turn and phrase, of the great masters of style, the old masters. Godwin, seeing in quotation a passage from *John Woodvil*, takes it for a choice fragment of an old dramatist, and goes to Lamb to assist him in finding the author. His power of delicate imitation in prose and verse reaches the length of a fine mimicry even, as in those last essays of Elia on Popular Fallacies, with their gentle reproduction or caricature of Sir Thomas Browne, showing, the more completely, his mastery, by disinterested study, of those elements of the man which were the real source of style in that great, solemn master of old English, who, ready to say what he has to say with fearless homeliness, yet continually overawes one with touches of a strange utterance from worlds afar. For it is with the delicacies of fine literature especially, its gradations of expression, its fine judgment, its pure sense of words, of vocabulary—things, alas! dying out in the English literature of the present, together with the appreciation of them in our literature of the past—that his literary mission is chiefly concerned. And yet, delicate, refining, daintily epicurean, as he may seem, when he writes of giants such as Hogarth or Shakespeare, though often but in a stray note, you catch the sense of veneration with which those great names in past literature and art brooded over his intelligence, his undiminished impressibility by the great effects in them. Reading, commenting on Shakespeare, he is like a man who walks alone under a grand stormy sky, and among unwonted tricks of light, when powerful spirits might seem to be abroad upon the air; and the grim humour of Hogarth, as he analyses it, rises into a kind of spectral grotesque; while he too knows the secret of fine, significant touches like theirs.

There are traits, customs, characteristics of houses and dress, surviving morsels of old life, such as Hogarth has transferred so vividly into *The Rake's Progress*, or *Marriage à la Mode*, concerning which we well understand how, common, uninteresting, or even worthless in themselves, they have come to please us at last as things picturesque, being set in relief against the modes of our different age. Customs, stiff to us, stiff dresses, stiff furniture—types of cast-off fashions, left by accident, and which no one ever meant to preserve—we contemplate with more than good-nature, as having in them the veritable accent of a time, not altogether to be replaced by its more solemn and self-conscious deposits; like those tricks of individuality which we find quite tolerable in persons, because they convey to us the secret of lifelike expression, and with regard to which we are all to some extent humourists. But it is part of the privilege of the genuine humourist to anticipate this pensive mood with regard to the ways and

things of his own day; to look upon the tricks in manner of the life about him with that same refined, purged sort of vision, which will come naturally to those of a later generation, in observing whatever may have survived by chance of its mere external habit. Seeing things always by the light of an understanding more entire than is possible for ordinary minds, of the whole mechanism of humanity, and seeing also the manner, the outward mode or fashion, always in strict connexion with the spiritual condition which determined it, a humourist such as Charles Lamb anticipates the enchantment of distance; and the characteristic of places, ranks, habits of life, are transfigured for him, even now and in advance of time, by poetic light; justifying what some might condemn as mere sentimentality, in the effort to hand on unbroken the tradition of such fashion or accent. "The praise of beggars," "the cries of London," the traits of actors just grown "old", the spots in "town" where the country, its fresh green and fresh water, still lingered on, one after another, amidst the bustle; the quaint, dimmed, just played-out farces, he had relished so much, coming partly through them to understand the earlier English theatre as a thing once really alive; those fountains and sun-dials of old gardens, of which he entertains such dainty discourse:—he feels the poetry of these things, as the poetry of things old indeed, but surviving as an actual part of the life of the present, and as something quite different from the poetry of things flatly gone from us and antique, which come back to us, if at all, as entire strangers, like Scott's old Scotch-border personages, their oaths and armour. Such gift of appreciation depends, as I said, on the habitual apprehension of men's life as a whole—its organic wholeness, as extending even to the least things in it—of its outward manner in connexion with its inward temper; and it involves a fine perception of the congruities, the musical accordancy between humanity and its environment of custom, society, personal intercourse; as if all this, with its meetings, partings, ceremonies, gesture, tones of speech, were some delicate instrument on which an expert performer is playing.

These are some of the characteristics of Elia, one essentially an essayist, and of the true family of Montaigne, "never judging," as he says, "system-wise of things, but fastening on particulars"; saying all things as it were on chance occasion only, and by way of pastime, yet succeeding thus, "glimpse-wise", in catching and recording more frequently than others "the gayest, happiest attitude of things"; a casual writer for dreamy readers, yet always giving the reader so much more than he seemed to propose. There is something of the follower of George Fox about him, and the Quaker's belief in the inward light coming to one passive, to the mere wayfarer, who will be sure at all

events to lose no light which falls by the way—glimpses, suggestions, delightful half-apprehensions, profound thoughts of old philosophers, hints of the innermost reason in things, the full knowledge of which is held in reserve; all the varied stuff, that is, of which genuine essays are made.

And with him, as with Montaigne, the desire of self-portraiture is, below all more superficial tendencies, the real motive in writing at all—a desire closely connected with that intimacy, that modern subjectivity, which may be called the *Montaignesque* element in literature. What he designs is to give you himself, to acquaint you with his likeness; but must do this, if at all, indirectly, being indeed always more or less reserved, for himself and his friends; friendship counting for so much in his life, that he is jealous of anything that might jar or disturb it, even to the length of a sort of insincerity, to which he assigns its quaint “praise”, this lover of stage plays significantly welcoming a little touch of the artificiality of play to sweeten the intercourse of actual life.

And, in effect, a very delicate and expressive portrait of him does put itself together for the duly meditative reader. In indirect touches of his own work, scraps of faded old letters, what others remembered of his talk, the man’s likeness emerges; what he laughed and wept at, his sudden elevations, and longings after absent friends, his fine casuistries of affection and devices to jog sometimes, as he says, the lazy happiness of perfect love, his solemn moments of higher discourse with the young, as they came across him on one occasion, and went along a little way with him, the sudden, surprised apprehension of beauties in old literature, revealing anew the deep soul of poetry in things, and withal the pure spirit of fun, having its way again; laughter, that most short-lived of all things (some of Shakespeare’s even being grown hollow) wearing well with him. Much of all this comes out through his letters, which may be regarded as a department of his essays. He is an old-fashioned letter-writer, the essence of the old fashion of letter-writing lying, as with true essay-writing, in the dexterous availing oneself of accident and circumstance, in the prosecution of deeper lines of observation; although, just as with the record of his conversation, one loses something, in losing the actual tones of the stammerer, still graceful in his halting, as he halted also in composition, composing slowly and by fits, “like a Flemish painter”, as he tells us, so “it is to be regretted”, says the editor of his letters, “that in the printed letters the reader will lose the curious varieties of writing with which the originals abound, and which are scrupulously adapted to the subject.”

Also, he was a true “collector”, delighting in the personal finding

of a thing, in the colour an old book or print gets for him by the little accidents which attest previous ownership. Wither's *Emblems*, "that old book and quaint", long-desired, when he finds it at last, he values none the less because a child had coloured the plates with his paints. A lover of household warmth everywhere, of that tempered atmosphere which our various habitations get by men's living within them, he "sticks to his favourite books as he did to his friends", and loved the "town", with a jealous eye for all its characteristics, "old houses" coming to have souls for him. The yearning for mere warmth against him in another, makes him content, all through life, with pure brotherliness, "the most kindly and natural species of love", as he says, in place of the *passion* of love. Brother and sister, sitting thus side by side, have, of course, their anticipations how one of them must sit at last in the faint sun alone, and set us speculating, as we read, as to precisely what amount of melancholy really accompanied for him the approach of old age, so steadily foreseen; make us note also, with pleasure, his successive wakings up to cheerful realities, out of a too curious musing over what is gone and what remains, of life. In his subtle capacity for enjoying the more refined parts of earth, of human relationship, he could throw the gleam of poetry or humour on what seemed common or threadbare; has a care for the sighs, and the weary, humdrum preoccupations of very weak people, down to their little pathetic "gentilities", even; while, in the purely human temper, he can write of death, almost like Shakespeare.

And that care, through all his enthusiasm of discovery, for what is accustomed, in literature, connected thus with his close clinging to home and the earth, was congruous also with that love for the accustomed in religion, which we may notice in him. He is one of the last votaries of that old-world sentiment, based on the feelings of hope and awe, which may be described as the religion of men of letters (as Sir Thomas Browne has his *Religion of the Physician*) religion as understood by the soberer men of letters in the last century, Addison, Gray, and Johnson; by Jane Austen and Thackeray, later. A high way of feeling developed largely by constant intercourse with the great things of literature, and extended in its turn to those matters greater still, this religion lives, in the main retrospectively, in a system of received sentiments and beliefs; received, like those great things of literature and art, in the first instance, on the authority of a long tradition, in the course of which they have linked themselves in a thousand complex ways to the conditions of human life, and no more questioned now than the feeling one keeps by one of the greatness—say! of Shakespeare. For Charles Lamb, such form of religion becomes the solemn background on which the nearer and more exciting objects of his immediate

experience relieve themselves, borrowing from it an expression of calm; its necessary atmosphere being indeed a profound quiet, that quiet which has in it a kind of sacramental efficacy, working, we might say, on the principle of the *opus operatum*, almost without any co-operation of one's own, towards the assertion of the higher self. And, in truth, to men of Lamb's delicately attuned temperament mere physical stillness has its full value; such natures seeming to long for it sometimes, as for no merely negative thing, with a sort of mystical sensuality.

The writings of Charles Lamb are an excellent illustration of the value of reserve in literature. Below his quiet, his quaintness, his humour, and what may seem the slightness, the occasional or accidental character of his work, there lies, as I said at starting, as in his life, a genuinely tragic element. The gloom, reflected at its darkest in those hard shadows of *Rosamund Grey*, is always there, though not always realised either for himself or his readers, and restrained always in utterance. It gives to those lighter matters on the surface of life and literature among which he for the most part moved, a wonderful force of expression, as if at any moment these slight words and fancies might pierce very far into the deeper soul of things. In his writing, as in his life, that quiet is not the low-flying of one from the first drowsy by choice, and needing the prick of some strong passion or worldly ambition, to stimulate him into all the energy of which he is capable; but rather the reaction of nature, after an escape from fate, dark and insane as in old Greek tragedy, following upon which the sense of mere relief becomes a kind of passion, as with one who, having narrowly escaped earthquake or shipwreck, finds a thing for grateful tears in just sitting quiet at home, under the wall, till the end of days.

He felt the genius of places; and I sometimes think he resembles the places he knew and liked best, and where his lot fell—London, sixty-five years ago, with Covent Garden and the old theatres, and the Temple gardens still unspoiled, Thames gliding down, and beyond to north and south the fields at Enfield or Hampton, to which, "with their living trees", the thoughts wander "from the hard wood of the desk"—fields fresher, and coming nearer to town then, but in one of which the present writer remembers, on a brooding early summer's day, to have heard the cuckoo for the first time. Here, the surface of things is certainly humdrum, the streets dingy, the green places, where the child goes a-maying, tame enough. But nowhere are things more apt to respond to the brighter weather, nowhere is there so much difference between rain and sunshine,

nowhere do the clouds roll together more grandly; those quaint suburban pastorals gathering a certain quality of grandeur from the background of the great city, with its weighty atmosphere, and portent of storm in the rapid light on dome and bleached stone steeples.

ÆSTHETIC POETRY

THE "æsthetic" poetry is neither a mere reproduction of Greek or medieval poetry, nor only an idealisation of modern life and sentiment. The atmosphere on which its effect depends belongs to no simple form of poetry, no actual form of life. Greek poetry, medieval or modern poetry, projects, above the realities of its time, a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that transfigured world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial "earthly paradise". It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal. Like some strange second flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but must not be confounded with it. The secret of the enjoyment of it is that inversion of home-sickness known to some, that incurable thirst for the sense of escape, which no actual form of life satisfies, no poetry even, if it be merely simple and spontaneous.

The writings of the "romantic school", of which the æsthetic poetry is an afterthought, mark a transition not so much from the pagan to the medieval ideal, as from a lower to a higher degree of passion in literature. The end of the eighteenth century, swept by vast disturbing currents, experienced an excitement of spirit of which one note was a reaction against an outworn classicism severed not more from nature than from the genuine motives of ancient art; and a return to true Hellenism was as much a part of this reaction as the sudden pre-occupation with things medieval. The medieval tendency is in Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*, the Hellenic in his *Iphigenie*. At first this medievalism was superficial, or at least external. Adventure, romance in the frankest sense, grotesque individualism—that is one element in medieval poetry, and with it alone Scott and Goethe dealt. Beyond them were the two other elements of the medieval spirit: its mystic religion at its apex in Dante and Saint Louis, and its mystic passion, passing here and there into the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard. That stricter, imaginative medievalism which re-creates the mind of the Middle Ages, so that the form, the presentment grows outward from within, came later with Victor Hugo in France, with Heine in Germany.

In the *Defence of Guenevere: and Other Poems*, published by Mr. William Morris now many years ago, the first typical specimen of æsthetic

poetry, we have a refinement upon this later, profounder medievalism. The poem which gives its name to the volume is a thing tormented and awry with passion, like the body of Guenevere defending herself from the charge of adultery, and the accent falls in strange, unwonted places with the effect of a great cry. In truth these Arthurian legends, in their origin prior to Christianity, yield all their sweetness only in a Christian atmosphere. What is characteristic in them is the strange suggestion of a deliberate choice between Christ and a rival lover. That religion, monastic religion at any rate, has its sensuous side, a dangerously sensuous side, has been often seen: it is the experience of Rousseau as well as of the Christian mystics. The Christianity of the Middle Ages made way among a people whose loss was in the life of the senses partly by its æsthetic beauty, a thing so profoundly felt by the Latin hymn-writers, who for one moral or spiritual sentiment have a hundred sensuous images. And so in those imaginative loves, in their highest expression, the Provençal poetry, it is a rival religion with a new rival *cultus* that we see. Coloured through and through with Christian sentiment, they are rebels against it. The rejection of one worship for another is never lost sight of. The jealousy of that other lover, for whom these words and images and refined ways of sentiment were first devised, is the secret here of a borrowed, perhaps factitious colour and heat. It is the mood of the cloister taking a new direction, and winning so a later space of life it never anticipated.

Hereon, as before in the cloister, so now in the *château*, the reign of reverie set in. The devotion of the cloister knew that mood, thoroughly, and had sounded all its stops. For the object of this devotion was absent or veiled, not limited to one supreme plastic form like Zeus at Olympia or Athena in the Acropolis, but distracted, as in a fever dream, into a thousand symbols and reflections. But then, the Church, that new Sybil, had a thousand secrets to make the absent near. Into this kingdom of reverie, and with it into a paradise of ambitious refinements, the earthly love enters, and becomes a prolonged somnambulism. Of religion it learns the art of directing towards an unseen object sentiments whose natural direction is towards objects of sense. Hence a love defined by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant, antinomian. It is the love which is incompatible with marriage, for the chevalier who never comes, of the serf for the *châtelaine*, of the rose for the nightingale, of Rudel for the Lady of Tripoli. Another element of extravagance came in with the feudal spirit: Provençal love is full of the forms of vassalage. To be the servant of love, to have offended, to taste the subtle luxury of chastisement, of reconciliation—the religious spirit, too, knows that, and

meets just there, as in Rousseau, the delicacies of the earthly love. Here, under this strange complex of conditions, as in some medicated air, exotic flowers of sentiment expand, among people of a remote and unaccustomed beauty, somnabulistic, frail, androgynous, the light almost shining through them. Surely, such loves were too fragile and adventurous to last more than for a moment.

The monastic religion of the Middle Age was, in fact, in many of its bearings, like a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses: and a religion which is a disorder of the senses, must always be subject to illusions. Reverie, illusion, delirium: they are the three stages of a fatal descent both in the religion and the loves of the Middle Age. Nowhere has the impression of this delirium been conveyed as by Victor Hugo in *Nôtre Dame de Paris*. The strangest creations of sleep seem here, by some appalling licence, to cross the limit of the dawn. The English poet too has learned the secret. He has diffused through *King Arthur's Tomb* the maddening white glare of the sun, and tyranny of the moon, not tender and far-off, but close down—the sorcerer's moon, large and feverish. The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of "scarlet lilies". The influence of summer is like a poison in one's blood, with a sudden bewildering sickening of life and all things. In *Galabad: a Mystery*, the frost of Christmas night on the chapel stones acts as a strong narcotic: a sudden shrill ringing pierces through the numbness: a voice proclaims that the Grail has gone through the great forest. It is in the *Blue Closet* that this delirium reaches its height with a singular beauty, reserved perhaps for the enjoyment of the few.

A passion of which the outlets are sealed, begets a tension of nerve, in which the sensible world comes to one with a reinforced brilliancy and relief—all redness is turned into blood, all water into tears. Hence a wild, convulsed sensuousness in the poetry of the Middle Age, in which the things of nature begin to play a strange delirious part. Of the things of nature the medieval mind had a deep sense; but its sense of them was not objective, no real escape to the world without us. The aspects and motions of nature only reinforced its prevailing mood, and were in conspiracy with one's own brain against one. A single sentiment invaded the world: everything was infused with a motive drawn from the soul. The amorous poetry of Provence, making the starling and the swallow its messengers, illustrates the whole attitude of nature in this electric atmosphere, bent as by miracle or magic to the service of human passion.

The most popular and gracious form of Provençal poetry was the *nocturn*, sung by the lover at night at the door or under the window of his mistress. These songs were of different kinds, according to the hour at which they were intended to be sung. Some were to be

sung at midnight—songs inviting to sleep, the *serena*, or *serenade*; others at break of day—waking songs, the *aube* or *aubade*.* This waking-song is put sometimes into the mouth of a comrade of the lover, who plays sentinel during the night, to watch for and announce the dawn: sometimes into the mouth of one of the lovers, who are about to separate. A modification of it is familiar to us all in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the lovers debate whether the song they hear is of the nightingale or the lark; the aubade, with the other two great forms of love-poetry then floating in the world, the sonnet and the epithalamium, being here refined, heightened, and inwoven into the structure of the play. Those, in whom what Rousseau calls *les frayeurs nocturnes* are constitutional, know what splendour they give to the things of the morning; and how there comes something of relief from physical pain with the first white film in the sky. The Middle Age knew those terrors in all their forms and these songs of the morning win hence a strange tenderness and effect. The crown of the English poet's book is one of these appreciations of the dawn:—

“Pray but one prayer for me ’twixt thy closed lips,
 Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
 The summer-night waneth, the morning light slips
 Faint and gray ’twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud-
 bars,
 That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
 Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
 Waits to float through them along with the sun.
 Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
 The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
 The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
 Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
 Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
 Speak but one word to me over the corn,
 Over the tender, bowed locks of the corn.”

It is the very soul of the bridegroom which goes forth to the bride: inanimate things are longing with him: all the sweetness of the imaginative loves of the Middle Age, with a superadded spirituality of touch all its own, is in that!

The *Defence of Guenevere* was published in 1858; the *Life and Death of Jason* in 1867; to be followed by *The Earthly Paradise*; and the change of manner wrought in the interval, entire, almost a revolt, is charac-

* Faurile's *Histoire de la Poésie Provençale*, tome ii, ch. xviii.

teristic of the æsthetic poetry. Here there is no delirium or illusion, no experiences of mere soul while the body and the bodily senses sleep, or wake with convulsed intensity at the prompting of imaginative love; but rather the great primary passions under broad daylight as of the pagan Veronese. This simplification interests us, not merely for the sake of an individual poet—full of charm as he is—but chiefly because it explains through him a transition which, under many forms, is one law of the life of the human spirit, and of which what we call the Renaissance is only a supreme instance. Just so the monk in his cloister, through the “open vision”, open only to the spirit, divined, aspired to, and at last apprehended, a better daylight, but earthly, open only to the senses. Complex and subtle interests, which the mind spins for itself may occupy art and poetry or our own spirits for a time; but sooner or later they come back with a sharp rebound to the simple elementary passions—anger, desire, regret, pity, and fear: and what corresponds to them in the sensuous world—bare, abstract fire, water, air, tears, sleep, silence, and what De Quincey has called the “glory of motion”.

This reaction from dreamlight to daylight gives, as always happens, a strange power in dealing with morning and the things of the morning. Not less is this Hellenist of the Middle Age master of dreams, of sleep and the desire of sleep—sleep in which no one walks, restorer of childhood to men—dreams, not like Galahad’s or Guenevere’s, but full of happy, childish wonder as in the earlier world. It is a world in which the centaur and the ram with the fleece of gold are conceivable. The song sung always claims to be sung for the first time. There are hints at a language common to birds and beasts and men. Everywhere there is an impression of surprise, as of people first waking from the golden age, at fire, snow, wine, the touch of water as one swims, the salt taste of the sea. And this simplicity at first hand is a strange contrast to the sought-out simplicity of Wordsworth. Desire here is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it.

And yet it is one of the charming anachronisms of a poet, who, while he handles an ancient subject, never becomes an antiquarian, but animates his subject by keeping it always close to himself, that between whiles we have a sense of English scenery as from an eye well practised under Wordsworth’s influence, as from “the casement half opened on summer nights”, with the song of the brown bird among the willows, the

“Noise of bells, such as in moonlit lanes
Rings from the grey team on the market night.”

Nowhere but in England is there such a "paradise of birds", the fern-owl, the water-hen, the thrush in a hundred sweet variations, the ger falcon, the kestrel, the starling, the pea-fowl; birds heard from the field by the townsman down in the streets at dawn; doves everywhere, pink-footed, grey-winged, flitting about the temple, troubled by the temple incense, trapped in the snow. The sea-touches are not less sharp and firm, surest of effect in places where river and sea, salt and fresh waves, conflict.

In handling a subject of Greek legend, anything in the way of an actual revival must always be impossible. Such vain antiquarianism is a waste of the poet's power. The composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us: to deduct from that experience, to obliterate any part of it, to come face to face with the people of a past age, as if the Middle Age, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century had not been, is as impossible as to become a little child, or enter again into the womb and be born. But though it is not possible to repress a single phase of that humanity, which, because we live and move and have our being in the life of humanity, makes us what we are, it is possible to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it; as we may hark back to some choice space of our own individual life. We cannot truly conceive the age: we can conceive the element it has contributed to our culture: we can treat the subjects of the age bringing that into relief. Such an attitude towards Greece, aspiring to but never actually reaching its way of conceiving life, is what is possible in art.

The modern poet or artist who treats in this way a classical story comes very near, if not to the Hellenism of Homer, yet to the Hellenism of Chaucer, the Hellenism of the Middle Age, or rather of that exquisite first period of the Renaissance within it. Afterwards the Renaissance takes its side, becomes, perhaps, exaggerated or facile. But the choice life of the human spirit is always under mixed lights, and in mixed situations, when it is not too sure of itself, is still expectant, girt up to leap forward to the promise. Such a situation there was in that earliest return from the overwrought spiritualities of the Middle Age to the earlier, more ancient life of the senses; and for us the most attractive form of classical story is the monk's conception of it, when he escapes from the sombre atmosphere of his cloister to natural light. The fruits of this mood, which, divining more than it understands, infuses into the scenery and figures of Christian history some subtle reminiscence of older gods, or into the story of Cupid and Psyche that passionate stress of spirit which the world owes to Christianity, constitute a peculiar vein of interest in the art of the fifteenth century.

And so, before we leave *Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise*, a word must be said about their mediævalism, delicate inconsistencies, which, coming in a poem of Greek subject, bring into this white dawn thoughts of the delirious night just over and make one's sense of relief deeper. The opening of the fourth book of *Jason* describes the embarkation of the Argonauts: as in a dream, the scene shifts and we go down from Iolchos to the sea through a pageant of the Middle Age in some French or Italian town. The gilded vanes on the spires, the bells ringing in the towers, the trellis of roses at the window, the close planted with apple-trees, the grotesque undercroft with its close-set pillars, change by a single touch the air of these Greek cities and we are at Glastonbury by the tomb of Arthur. The nymph in furred raiment who seduces Ilylas is conceived frankly in the spirit of Teutonic romance; her song is of a garden enclosed, such as that with which the old church glass-stainer surrounds the mystic bride of the Song of Songs. Medea herself has a hundred touches of the mediæval sorceress, the sorceress of the Streckelberg or the Blocksberg: her mystic changes are Christabel's. It is precisely this effect, this grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the Middle Age, which forms the chief motive of *The Earthly Paradise*: with an exquisite dexterity the two threads of sentiment are here interwoven and contrasted. A band of adventurers sets out from Norway, most northerly of northern lands, where the plague is raging—the bell continually ringing as they carry the Sacrament to the sick. Even in Mr. Morris's earliest poems snatches of the sweet French tongue had always come with something of Hellenic blitheness and grace. And now it is below the very coast of France, through the fleet of Edward the Third, among the gaily painted mediæval sails, that we pass to a reserved fragment of Greece, which by some divine good fortune lingers on in the western sea into the Middle Age. There the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* are told, Greek story and romantic alternating; and for the crew of the *Rose Garland*, coming across the sins of the earlier world with the sign of the cross, and drinking Rhine-wine in Greece, the two worlds of sentiment are confronted.

One characteristic of the pagan spirit the æsthetic poetry has, which is on the surface—the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it—the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death. But that complexion of sentiment is at its height in another “æsthetic” poet of whom I have to speak, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (*page* 87).

CONCLUSION TO "THE RENAISSANCE"

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But these elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone; we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us these elements are broadcast, driven by many forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few of ten thousand resulting combinations. That clear perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of colour from the wall—the movement of the shore side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest,—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to act upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force is suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture,—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language

invests them, but of impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further; the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.

Analysis goes a step further still, and tells us that those impressions of the individual to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each one of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we are trying to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is *real* in our life fines itself down. It is with the movement, the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off,—that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren*. The service of philosophy, and of religion and culture as well, to the human spirit, is to startle it into a sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us,—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How can we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. Failure is to form habits; for habit is relative to a stereotyped world; meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems, by a lifted horizon, to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some

passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliance of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways is, on this short night of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte or of Hegel, or of our own. Theories, religious or philosophical ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. *La philosophie, c'est la microscope de la pensée.* The theory, or idea, or system, which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful places in the writings of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung to him, and now in early manhood he believed himself stricken by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biassed by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well, we are all *condamnés*, as Victor Hugo says: *les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song. For our one chance is in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. High passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the "enthusiasm of humanity". Only, be sure it is passion, that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

It was characteristic of a poet who had ever something about him of mystic isolation, and will still appeal perhaps, though with a name it may seem now established in English literature, to a special and limited audience, that some of his poems had won a kind of exquisite fame before they were in the full sense published. *The Blessed Damsel*, although actually printed twice before the year 1870, was eagerly circulated in manuscript; and the volume which it now opens came at last to satisfy a long-standing curiosity as to the poet, whose pictures also had become an object of the same peculiar kind of interest. For those poems were the work of a painter, understood to belong to, and to be indeed the leader of, a new school then rising into note; and the reader of to-day may observe already, in *The Blessed Damsel*, written at the age of eighteen, a prefigurement of the chief characteristics of that school, as he will recognise in it also, in proportion as he really knows Rossetti, many of the characteristics which are most markedly personal and his own. Common to that school and to him, and in both alike of primary significance, was the quality of sincerity, already felt as one of the charms of that earliest poem—a perfect sincerity, taking effect in the deliberate use of the most direct and unconventional expression, for the conveyance of a poetic sense which recognised no conventional standard of what poetry was called upon to be. At a time when poetic originality in England might seem to have had its utmost play, here was certainly one new poet more, with a structure and music of verse, a vocabulary an accent, unmistakably novel, yet felt to be no more tricks of manner adopted with a view to forcing attention—an accent which might rather count as the very seal of reality on one man's own proper speech; as that speech itself was the wholly natural expression of certain wonderful things he really felt and saw. Here was one, who had a matter to present to his readers, to himself at least, in the first instance, so valuable, so real and definite, that his primary aim, as regards form or expression in his verse, would be but its exact equivalence to those *data* within. That he had this gift of transparency in language—the control of a style which did but obediently shift and shape itself to the mental motion, as a well-trained hand can follow on the tracing-paper the outline of an original drawing below it, was proved afterwards by a volume of typically perfect translations from the delightful but difficult

"early Italian poets"; such transparency being indeed the secret of all genuine style, of all such style as can truly belong to one man and not to another. His own meaning was always personal and even recondite, in a certain sense learned and casuistical, sometimes complex or obscure; but the term was always, one could see, deliberately chosen from many competitors, as the just transcript of that peculiar phrase of soul which he alone knew, precisely as he knew it.

One of the peculiarities of *The Blessed Damsel* was a definiteness of sensible imagery, which seemed almost grotesque to some, and was strange, above all, in a theme so profoundly visionary. The gold bar of heaven from which she leaned, her hair yellow like ripe corn, are but examples of a general treatment, as naïvely detailed as the pictures of those early painters contemporary with Dante, who has shown a similar care for minute and definite imagery in his verse; there, too, in the very midst of profoundly mystic vision. Such definition of outline is indeed one among many points in which Rossetti resembles the great Italian poet, of whom, led to him at first by family circumstances, he was ever a lover—a "servant and singer", faithful as Dante, "of Florence and of Beatrice"—with some close inward conformities of genius also, independent of any mere circumstances of education. It was said by a critic of the last century, not wisely though agreeably to the practice of his time, that poetry rejoices in abstractions. For Rossetti, as for Dante, without question on his part, the first condition of the poetic way of seeing and presenting things is particularisation. "Tell me now," he writes, for Villon's

"Dictes-moy où, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora, la belle Romaine"—

"Tell me now, in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman":

—"way", in which one might actually chance to meet her; the unmistakably poetic effect of the couplet in English being dependent on the definiteness of that single word (though actually lighted on in the search after a difficult double rhyme) for which every one else would have written, like Villon himself, a more general one, just equivalent to place or region.

And this delight in concrete definition is allied with another of his conformities to Dante, the really imaginative vividness, namely, of his personifications—his hold upon them, or rather their hold upon him, with the force of a Frankenstein, when once they have taken life from him. Not Death only and Sleep, for instance, and the winged

spirit of Love, but certain particular aspects of them, a whole "populace" of special hours and places, "the hour" even "which might have been, yet might not be", are living creatures, with hands and eyes and articulate voices.

"Stands it not by the door—
 Love's Hour—till she and I shall meet;
 With bodiless form and unapparent feet
 That cast no shadow yet before,
 Though round its head the dawn begins to pour
 The breath that makes day sweet?"—

"Nay, why
 Name the dead hours? I mind them well:
 Their ghosts in many darkened doorways dwell
 With desolate eyes to know them by."

Poetry as a *mania*—one of Plato's two higher forms of "divine" mania—has, in all its species, a mere insanity incidental to it, the "defect of its quality", into which it may lapse in its moment of weakness; and the insanity which follows a vivid poetic anthropomorphism like that of Rossetti may be noted here and there in his work, in a forced and almost grotesque materialising of abstractions, as Dante also became at times a mere subject of the scholastic realism of the Middle Age.

In *Love's Nocturn* and *The Stream's Secret*, congruously perhaps with a certain feverishness of soul in the moods they present, there is at times a near approach (may it be said?) to such insanity of realism—

"Pity and love shall burn
 In her pressed cheek and cherishing hands;
 And from the living spirit of love that stands
 Between her lips to soothe and yearn,
 Each separate breath shall clasp me round in turn
 And loose my spirit's hands."

But even if we concede this; even if we allow, in the very plan of those two compositions, something of the literary conceit—what exquisite, what novel flowers of poetry, we must admit them to be, as they stand! In the one, what a delight in all the natural beauty of water, all its details for the eye of a painter; in the other, how subtle and fine the imaginative hold upon all the secret ways of sleep and dreams! In both of them, with much the same attitude and tone, Love—sick

and doubtful Love—would fain inquire of what lies below the surface of sleep, and below the water; stream or dream being forced to speak by Love's powerful "control"; and the poet would have it foretell the fortune, issue, and event of his wasting passion. Such artifices, indeed, were not unknown in the old Provençal poetry of which Dante had learned something. Only, in Rossetti at least, they are redeemed by a serious purpose, by that sincerity of his, which allies itself readily to a serious beauty, a sort of grandeur of literary workmanship, to a great style. One seems to hear there a really new kind of poetic utterance, with effects which have nothing else like them; as there is nothing else, for instance, like the narrative of Jacob's Dream in *Genesis*, or Blake's design on the Singing of the Morning Stars, or Addison's Nineteenth Psalm.

With him indeed, as in some revival of the old mythopœic age, common things—dawn, noon, night—are full of human or personal expression, full of sentiment. The lovely little sceneries scattered up and down his poems, glimpses of a landscape, not indeed of broad open-air effects, but rather that of a painter concentrated upon the picturesque effect of one or two selected objects at a time—the "hollow brimmed with mist", or the "ruined weir", as he sees it from one of the windows, or reflected in one of the mirrors of his "house of life" (the vignettes for instance seen by Rose Mary in the magic beryl) attest, by their very freshness and simplicity, to a pictorial or descriptive power in dealing with the inanimate world, which is certainly also one half of the charm, in that other, more remote and mystic, use of it. For with Rossetti this sense of lifeless nature, after all, is translated to a higher service, in which it does but incorporate itself with some phase of strong emotion. Every one understands how this may happen at critical moments of life; what a weirdly expressive soul may have crept, even in full noonday, into "the white-flower'd elder-thicket", when Godiva saw it "gleam through the Gothic archways in the wall", at the end of her terrible ride. To Rossetti it is so always, because to him life is a crisis at every moment. A sustained impressibility towards the mysterious conditions of man's everyday life, towards the very mystery itself in it, gives a singular gravity to all his work: those matters never became trite to him. But throughout, it is the ideal intensity of love—of love based upon a perfect yet peculiar type of physical or material beauty—which is enthroned in the midst of those mysterious powers; Youth and Death, Destiny and Fortune, Fame, Poetic Fame, Memory, Oblivion, and the like. Rossetti is one of those who, in the words of Mérimée, *se passionnent pour la passion*, one of Love's lovers.

And yet, again as with Dante, to speak of his ideal type of beauty

as material, is partly misleading. Spirit and matter, indeed, have been for the most part opposed, with a false contrast or antagonism by schoolmen, whose artificial creation those abstractions really are. In our actual concrete experience, the two trains of phenomena which the words *matter* and *spirit* do but roughly distinguish, play inextricably into each other. Practically, the church of the Middle Age by its æsthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter, and its results in men's way of taking life; and in this, Dante is the central representative of its spirit. To him, in the vehement and impassioned heat of his conceptions, the material and the spiritual are fused and blent: if the spiritual attains the definite visibility of a crystal, what is material loses its earthiness and impurity. And here again, by force of instinct, Rossetti is one with him. His chosen type of beauty is one,

"Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought,
Nor Love her body from her soul."

Like Dante, he knows no region of spirit which shall not be sensuous also, or material. The shadowy world, which he realises so powerfully, has still the ways and houses, the land and water, the light and darkness, the fire and flowers, that had so much to do in the moulding of those bodily powers and aspects which counted for so large a part of the soul, here.

For Rossetti, then, the great affections of persons to each other, swayed and determined, in the case of his highly pictorial genius, mainly by that so-called material loveliness, formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance, in a world where all beside might be but shadow. The fortunes of those affections—of the great love so determined; its casuistries, its languor sometimes; above all, its sorrows; its fortunate or unfortunate collisions with those other great matters; how it looks, as the long day of life goes round, in the light and shadow of them: all this, conceived with an abundant imagination, and a deep, a philosophic, reflectiveness, is the matter of his verse, and especially of what he designed as his chief poetic work "a work to be called *The House of Life*", towards which the majority of his sonnets and songs were contributions.

The dwelling-place in which one finds oneself by chance or destiny, yet can partly fashion for oneself; never properly one's own at all, if it be changed too lightly; in which every object has its associations—the dim mirrors, the portraits, the lamps, the books, the hair-tresses of the dead and visionary magic crystals in the secret drawers, the

names and words scratched on the windows, windows open upon prospects the saddest or the sweetest; the house one must quit, yet taking perhaps, how much of its quietly active light and colour along with us!—grown now to be a kind of raiment to one's body, as the body, according to Swedenborg, is but the raiment of the soul—under that image, the whole of Rossetti's work might count as a *House of Life*, of which he is but the "Interpreter". And it is a "haunted" house. A sense of power in love, defying distance, and those barriers which are so much more than physical distance, of unutterable desire penetrating into the world of sleep, however "lead-bound", was one of those anticipative notes obscurely struck in *The Blessed Damsel*, and, in his later work, makes him speak sometimes almost like a believer in mesmerism. Dream-land, as we said, with its "phantoms of the body", deftly coming and going on love's service, is to him, in no mere fancy or figure of speech, a real country, a veritable expansion of, or addition to, our waking life; and he did well perhaps to wait carefully upon sleep, for the lack of it became mortal disease with him. One may even recognise a sort of morbid and over-hasty making-ready for death itself, which increases on him; thoughts concerning it, its imageries, coming with a frequency and importunity, in excess, one might think, of even the very saddest, quite wholesome wisdom.

And indeed the publication of his second volume of *Ballads and Sonnets* preceded his death by scarcely a twelvemonth. That volume bears witness to the reverse of any failure of power, or falling-off from his early standard of literary perfection, in every one of his then accustomed forms of poetry—the song, the sonnet, and the ballad. The newly printed sonnets, now completing the *House of Life*, certainly advanced beyond those earlier ones, in clearness; his dramatic power in the ballad, was here at its height; while one monumental, gnomic piece, *Soothsay*, testifies, more clearly even than the *Nineveh* of his first volume, to the reflective force, the dry reason, always at work behind his imaginative creations, which at no time dispensed with a genuine intellectual structure. For in matters of pure reflection also, Rossetti maintained the painter's sensuous clearness of conception; and this has something to do with the capacity, largely illustrated by his ballads, of telling some red-hearted story of impassioned action with effect.

Have there, in very deed, been ages, in which the external conditions of poetry such as Rossetti's were of more spontaneous growth than in our own? The archaic side of Rossetti's work, his preferences in regard to earlier poetry, connect him with those who have certainly thought so, who fancied they could have breathed more largely in the age of Chaucer, or of Ronsard, in one of those ages, in the words of Stendhal—*ces siècles de passions où les âmes pouvaient se livrer franchement*

à la plus haute exaltation, quand les passions qui font la possibilité comme les sujets des beaux arts existaient. We may think, perhaps, that such old time as that has never really existed except in the fancy of poets; but it was to find it, that Rossetti turned so often from modern life to the chronicle of the past. Old Scotch history, perhaps beyond any other, is strong in the matter of heroic and vehement hatreds and love, the tragic Mary herself being but the perfect blossom of them; and it is from that history that Rossetti has taken the subjects of the two longer ballads of his second volume: of the three admirable ballads in it, *The King's Tragedy* (in which Rossetti has dexterously interwoven some relics of James's own exquisite early verse) reaching the highest level of dramatic success, and marking perfection, perhaps, in this kind of poetry; which, in the earlier volume, gave us, among other pieces, *Troy Town*, *Sister Helen*, and *Eden Bower*.

Like those earlier pieces, the ballads of the second volume bring with them the question of the poetic value of the "refrain"—

"Eden bower's in flower:
And O the bower and the hour!"

—and the like. Two of those ballads—*Troy Town* and *Eden Bower*, are terrible in theme; and the refrain serves, perhaps, to relieve their bold aim at the sentiment of terror. In *Sister Helen* again, the refrain has a real, and sustained purpose (being here duly varied also) and performs the part of a chorus, as the story proceeds. Yet even in these cases, whatever its effect may be in actual recitation, it may fairly be questioned, whether, to the mere reader their actual effect is not that of a positive interruption and drawback, at least in pieces so lengthy; and Rossetti himself, it would seem, came to think so, for in the shortest of his later ballads, *The White Ship*—that old true history of the generosity with which a youth, worthless in life, flung himself upon death—he was contented with a single utterance of the refrain, "given out" like the keynote or tune of a chant.

In *The King's Tragedy*, Rossetti has worked upon motive, broadly human (to adopt the phrase of popular criticism) such as one and all may realise. Rossetti, indeed, with all his self-concentration upon his own peculiar aim, by no means ignored those general interests which are external to poetry as he conceived it; as he has shown here and there, in this poetic, as also in pictorial, work. It was but that, in a life to be shorter even than the average, he found enough to occupy him in the fulfilment of a task, plainly "given him to do". Perhaps, if one had to name a single composition of his to readers desiring to make acquaintance with him for the first time, one would select: *The*

King's Tragedy—that poem so moving, so popularly dramatic, and lifelike. Notwithstanding this, his work, it must be conceded, certainly through no narrowness or egotism, but in the faithfulness of a true workman to a vocation so emphatic, was mainly of the esoteric order. But poetry, at all times, exercises two distinct functions: it may reveal, it may unveil to every eye, the ideal aspects of common things, after Gray's way (though Gray too, it is well to remember, seemed in his own day, seemed even to Johnson, obscure) or it may actually add to the number of motives poetic and uncommon in themselves, by the imaginative creation of things that are ideal from their very birth. Rossetti did something, something excellent, of the former kind; but his characteristic, his really revealing work, lay in the adding to poetry of fresh poetic material, of a new order of phenomena, in the creation of a new ideal.

GERMANY

WINCKELMANN

DUKE CARL OF ROSENMOLD

WINCKELMANN

ET EGO IN ARCADIA FUI

GOETHE'S fragments of art-criticism contain a few pages of strange pregnancy on the character of Winckelmann. He speaks of the teacher who had made his career possible, but whom he had never seen, as of an abstract type of culture, consummate, tranquil, withdrawn already into the region of ideals, yet retaining colour from the incidents of a passionate intellectual life. He classes him with certain works of art, possessing an inexhaustible gift of suggestion, to which criticism may return again and again with renewed freshness. Hegel, in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*, estimating the work of his predecessors, has also passed a remarkable judgment on Winckelmann's writings:—"Winckelmann, by contemplation of the ideal works of the ancients, received a sort of inspiration, through which he opened a new sense for the study of art. He is to be regarded as one of those who, in the sphere of art, have known how to initiate a new organ for the human spirit." That it has given a new sense, that it has laid open a new organ, is the highest that can be said of any critical effort. It is interesting then to ask what kind of man it was who thus laid open a new organ. Under what conditions was that effected?

Johann Joachim Winckelmann was born at Stendal, in Brandenburg, in the year 1717. The child of a poor tradesman, he passed through many struggles in early youth, the memory of which ever remained in him as a fitful cause of dejection. In 1763, in the full emancipation of his spirit, looking over the beautiful Roman prospect, he writes—"One gets spoiled here; but God owed me this; in my youth I suffered too much." Destined to assert and interpret the charm of the Hellenic spirit, he served first a painful apprenticeship in the tarnished intellectual world of Germany in the earlier half of the eighteenth century. Passing out of that into the happy light of the antique, he had a sense of exhilaration almost physical. We find him as a child in the dusky precincts of a German school, hungrily feeding on a few colourless books. The master of this school grows blind; Winckelmann becomes his *famulus*. The old man would have had him study theology. Winckelmann, free of the master's library, chooses rather to become familiar with the Greek classics. Herodotus and Homer win, with their "vowelled" Greek, his warmest enthusiasm; whole nights of fever are devoted to them; disturbing dreams of an Odyssey of his

own come to him. "He felt in himself," says Madame de Staël, "an ardent attraction towards the South. In German imaginations even now traces are often to be found of that love of the sun, that weariness of the North (*cette fatigue du nord*), which carried the northern peoples away into the countries of the South. A fine sky brings to birth sentiments not unlike the love of one's Fatherland."

To most of us, after all our steps towards it, the antique world, in spite of its intense outlines, its own perfect self-expression, still remains faint and remote. To him, closely limited except on the side of the ideal, building for his dark poverty "a house not made with hands", it early came to seem more real than the present. In the fantastic plans of foreign travel continually passing through his mind, to Egypt, for instance, and to France, there seems always to be rather a wistful sense of something lost to be regained, than the desire of discovering anything new. Goethe has told us how, in his eagerness actually to handle the antique, he became interested in the insignificant vestiges of it which the neighbourhood of Strasbourg afforded. So we hear of Winckelmann's boyish antiquarian wanderings among the ugly Brandenburg sandhills. Such a conformity between himself and Winckelmann, Goethe would have gladly noted.

At twenty-one he enters the University of Halle, to study theology, as his friends desire; instead, he becomes the enthusiastic translator of Herodotus. The condition of Greek learning in German schools and universities had fallen, and there were no professors at Halle who could satisfy his sharp, intellectual craving. Of his professional education he always speaks with scorn, claiming to have been his own teacher from first to last. His appointed teachers did not perceive that a new source of culture was within their hands. *Homo vagus et inconstans!*—one of them pedantically reports of the future pilgrim to Rome, unaware on which side his irony was whetted. When professional education confers nothing but irritation on a Schiller, no one ought to be surprised: for Schiller, and such as he, are primarily spiritual adventurers. But that Winckelmann, the votary of the gravest of intellectual traditions, should get nothing but an attempt at suppression from the professional guardians of learning, is what may well surprise us.

In 1743 he became master of a school at Seehausen. This was the most wearisome period of his life. Notwithstanding a success in dealing with children, which seems to testify to something simple and primeval in his nature, he found the work of teaching very depressing. Engaged in this work, he writes that he still has within him a longing desire to attain to the knowledge of beauty—*sehnlich wünschte zur Kenntniss des Schönen zu gelangen*. He had to shorten his nights, sleeping

only four hours, to gain time for reading. And here Winckelmann made a step forward in culture. He multiplied his intellectual force by detaching from it all flaccid interests. He renounced mathematics and law, in which his reading had been considerable,—all but the literature of the arts. Nothing was to enter into his life unpenetrated by its central enthusiasm. At this time he undergoes the charm of Voltaire. Voltaire belongs to that flimsier, more artificial, classical tradition, which Winckelmann was one day to supplant, by the clear ring, the eternal outline, of the genuine antique. But it proves the authority of such a gift as Voltaire's that it allures and wins even those born to supplant it. Voltaire's impression on Winckelmann was never effaced; and it gave him a consideration for French literature which contrasts with his contempt for the literary products of Germany. German literature transformed, siderealised, as we see it in Goethe, reckons Winckelmann among its initiators. But Germany at that time presented nothing in which he could have anticipated *Iphigénie*, and the formation of an effective classical tradition in German literature.

Under this purely literary influence, Winckelmann protests against Christian Wolff and the philosophers. Goethe, in speaking of this protest, alludes to his own obligations to Emmanuel Kant. Kant's influence over the culture of Goethe, which he tells us could not have been resisted by him without loss, consisted in a severe limitation to the concrete. But he adds, that in born antiquaries, like Winckelmann, a constant handling of the antique, with its eternal outline, maintains that limitation as effectually as a critical philosophy. Plato, however, saved so often for his redeeming literary manner, is excepted from Winckelmann's proscription of the philosophers. The modern student most often meets Plato on that side which seems to pass beyond Plato into a world no longer pagan, based upon the conception of a spiritual life. But the element of affinity which he presents to Winckelmann is that which is wholly Greek, and alien from the Christian world, represented by that group of brilliant youths in the *Lysis*, still uninfected by any spiritual sickness, finding the end of all endeavour in the aspects of the human form, the continual stir and motion of a comely human life.

This new-found interest in Plato's dialogues could not fail to increase his desire to visit the countries of the classical tradition. "It is my misfortune," he writes, "that I was not born to great place, wherein I might have had cultivation, and the opportunity of following my instinct and forming myself." A visit to Rome probably was already designed, and he silently preparing for it. Count Büнау, the author of a historical work then of note, had collected at Nöthenitz a valuable library, now part of the library of Dresden. In 1748

Winckelmann wrote to Bünau in halting French:—He is emboldened, he says, by Bünau's indulgence for needy men of letters. He desires only to devote himself to study, having never allowed himself to be dazzled by favourable prospects in the Church. He hints at his doubtful position "in a metaphysical age, by which humane literature is trampled under foot. At present," he goes on, "little value is set on Greek literature, to which I have devoted myself so far as I could penetrate, when good books are so scarce and expensive." Finally, he desires a place in some corner of Bünau's library. "Perhaps, at some future time, I shall become more useful to the public, if, drawn from obscurity in whatever way, I can find means to maintain myself in the capital."

Soon afterwards we find Winckelmann in the library at Nöthenitz. Thence he made many visits to the collection of antiquities at Dresden. He became acquainted with many artists, above all with Oeser, Goethe's future friend and master, who, uniting a high culture with the practical knowledge of art, was fitted to minister to Winckelmann's culture. And now a new channel of communion with the Greek life was opened for him. Hitherto he had handled the words only of Greek poetry, stirred indeed and roused by them, yet divining beyond the words some unexpressed pulsation of sensuous life. Suddenly he is in contact with that life, still fervent in the relics of plastic art. Filled as our culture is with the classical spirit, we can hardly imagine how deeply the human mind was moved, when, at the Renaissance, in the midst of a frozen world, the buried fire of ancient art rose up from under the soil. Winckelmann here reproduces for us the earlier sentiment of the Renaissance. On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. How facile and direct, it seems to say, is this life of the senses and the understanding, when once we have apprehended it! Here, surely, is that more liberal mode of life we have been seeking so long, so near to us all the while. How mistaken and roundabout have been our efforts to reach it by mystic passion, and monastic reverie; how they have deflowered the flesh; how little have they really emancipated us! Hermione melts from her stony posture, and the lost proportions of life right themselves. Here, then, in vivid realisation we see the native tendency of Winckelmann to escape from abstract theory to intuition, to the exercise of sight and touch. Lessing, in the *Laocöon*, has theorised finely on the relation of poetry to sculpture; and philosophy may give us theoretical reasons why not poetry but sculpture should be the most sincere and exact expression of the Greek ideal. By a happy, unperplexed dexterity, Winckelmann solves the question in the concrete. It is what Goethe calls his *Gewahrwerden der griechischen Kunst*, his *finding* of Greek art.

Through the tumultuous richness of Goethe's culture, the influence

of Winckelmann is always discernible, as the strong, regulative undercurrent of a clear, antique motive. "One learns nothing from him," he says to Eckermann, "but one becomes something." If we ask what the secret of this influence was, Goethe himself will tell us—wholeness, unity with one's self, intellectual integrity. And yet these expressions, because they fit Goethe, with his universal culture so well, seem hardly to describe the narrow, exclusive interest of Winckelmann. Doubtless Winckelmann's perfection is a narrow perfection: his feverish nursing of the one motive of his life is a contrast to Goethe's various energy. But what affected Goethe, what instructed him and ministered to his culture, was the integrity, the truth to its type, of the given force. The development of this force was the single interest of Winckelmann, unembarrassed by anything else in him. Other interests, practical or intellectual, those slighter talents and motives not supreme, which in most men are the waste part of nature, and drain away their vitality, he plucked out and cast from him. The protracted longing of his youth is not a vague, romantic longing: he knows what he longs for, what he wills. Within its severe limits his enthusiasm burns like lava. "You know," says Lavater, speaking of Winckelmann's countenance, "that I consider ardour and indifference by no means incompatible in the same character. If ever there was a striking instance of that union, it is in the countenance before us." "A lowly childhood," says Goethe, "insufficient instruction in youth, broken, distracted studies in early manhood, the burden of school-keeping! He was thirty years old before he enjoyed a single favour of fortune: but so soon as he had attained to an adequate condition of freedom, he appears before us consummate and entire, complete in the ancient sense."

But his hair is turning grey, and he has not yet reached the south. The Saxon court had become Roman Catholic, and the way to favour at Dresden was through Roman ecclesiastics. Probably the thought of a profession of the papal religion was not new to Winckelmann. At one time he had thought of begging his way to Rome, from cloister to cloister, under the pretence of a disposition to change his faith. In 1751, the papal *nuncio*, Archinto, was one of the visitors at Nöthenitz. He suggested Rome as the fitting stage for Winckelmann's accomplishments, and held out the hope of a place in the Pope's library. Cardinal Passionei, charmed with Winckelmann's beautiful Greek writing, was ready to play the part of Mæcenas, if the indispensable change were made. Winckelmann accepted the bribe, and visited the *nuncio* at Dresden. Unquiet still at the word "profession", not without a struggle, he joined the Roman Church, July the 11th, 1754.

Goethe boldly pleads that Winckelmann was a pagan, that the

landmarks of Christendom meant nothing to him. It is clear that he intended to deceive no one by his disguise; fears of the inquisition are sometimes visible during his life in Rome; he entered Rome notoriously with the works of Voltaire in his possession; the thought of what Count Büнау might be thinking of him seems to have been his greatest difficulty. On the other hand, he may have had a sense of a certain antique and as it were pagan grandeur in the Roman Catholic religion. Turning from the crabbed Protestantism, which had been the *ennui* of his youth, he might reflect that while Rome had reconciled itself to the Renaissance, the Protestant principle in art had cut off Germany from the supreme tradition of beauty. And yet to that transparent nature, with its simplicity as of the earlier world, the loss of absolute sincerity must have been a real loss. Goethe understands that Winckelmann had made this sacrifice. Yet at the bar of the highest criticism, perhaps, Winckelmann may be absolved. The insincerity of his religious profession was only one incident of a culture in which the moral instinct, like the religious or political, was merged in the artistic. But then the artistic interest was that, by desperate faithfulness to which Winckelmann was saved from the mediocrity, which, breaking through no bounds, moves ever in a bloodless routine, and misses its one chance in the life of the spirit and the intellect. There have been instances of culture developed by every high motive in turn, and yet intense at every point; and the aim of our culture should be to attain not only as intense but as complete a life as possible. But often the higher life is only possible at all, on condition of the selection of that in which one's motive is native and strong; and this selection involves the renunciation of a crown reserved for others. Which is better?—to lay open a new sense, to initiate a new organ for the human spirit, or to cultivate many types of perfection up to a point which leaves us still beyond the range of their transforming power? Savonarola is one type of success; Winckelmann is another; criticism can reject neither, because each is true to itself. Winckelmann himself explains the motive of his life when he says, "It will be my highest reward, if posterity acknowledges that I have written worthily."

For a time he remained at Dresden. There his first book appeared, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works of Art in Painting and Sculpture*. Full of obscurities as it was, obscurities which baffled but did not offend Goethe when he first turned to art-criticism, its purpose was direct—an appeal from the artificial classicism of the day to the study of the antique. The book was well received, and a pension supplied through the king's confessor. In September 1755 he started for Rome, in the company of a young Jesuit. He was introduced to Raphael

Mengs, a painter then of note, and found a home near him, in the artists' quarter, in a place where he could "overlook, far and wide, the eternal city". At first he was perplexed with the sense of being a stranger on what was to him, spiritually, native soil. "Unhappily," he cried in French, often selected by him as the vehicle of strong feeling, "I am one of those whom the Greeks call *ὀψιμαθεὶς*.—I have come into the world and into Italy too late." More than thirty years afterwards, Goethe also, after many aspirations and severe preparation of mind, visited Italy. In early manhood, just as he too was *finding* Greek art, the rumour of that true artist's life of Winckelmann in Italy had strongly moved him. At Rome, spending a whole year drawing from the antique, in preparation for *Iphigenie*, he finds the stimulus of Winckelmann's memory ever active. Winckelmann's Roman life was simple, primeval, Greek. His delicate constitution permitted him the use only of bread and wine. Condemned by many as a renegade, he had no desire for places of honour, but only to see his merits acknowledged, and existence assured to him. He was simple without being niggardly; he desired to be neither poor nor rich.

Winckelmann's first years in Rome present all the elements of an intellectual situation of the highest interest. The beating of the soul against its bars, the sombre aspect, the alien traditions, the still barbarous literature of Germany, are afar off; before him are adequate conditions of culture, the sacred soil itself, the first tokens of the advent of the new German literature, with its broad horizons, its boundless intellectual promise. Dante, passing from the darkness of the *Inferno*, is filled with a sharp and joyful sense of light, which makes him deal with it, in the opening of the *Purgatorio*, in a wonderfully touching and penetrative way. Hellenism, which is the principle pre-eminently of intellectual light (our modern culture may have more colour, the medieval spirit greater heat and profundity, but Hellenism is pre-eminent for light), has always been most effectively conceived by those who have crept into it out of an intellectual world in which the sombre elements predominate. So it had been in the ages of the Renaissance. This repression, removed at last, gave force and glow to Winckelmann's native affinity to the Hellenic spirit. "There had been known before him," says Madame de Staël, "learned men who might be consulted like books; but no one had, if I may say so, made himself a pagan for the purpose of penetrating antiquity." "One is always a poor executant of conceptions not one's own"—*On exécute mal ce qu'on n'a pas conçu soi-même**—are true in their measure of every genuine enthusiasm. Enthusiasm,—that, in the broad Platonic sense of the *Phaedrus*, was the secret of his divinatory power over the Hellenic

* Words of Charlotte Corday before the *Convention*. [W.P.]

world. This enthusiasm, dependent as it is to a great degree on bodily temperament, has a power of re-enforcing the purer emotions of the intellect with an almost physical excitement. That his affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual, that the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it, is proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men. He has known, he says, many young men more beautiful than Guido's archangel. These friendships, bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom, perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture. A letter on taste, addressed from Rome to a young nobleman, Friedrich von Berg, is the record of such a friendship.

"I shall excuse my delay," he begins, "in fulfilling my promise of an essay on the taste for beauty in works of art, in the words of Pindar. He says to Agesidamus, a youth of Locri—*ἰδέα τε καλὸν, ὥρα τε κεκραμένον*—whom he had kept waiting for an intended ode, that a debt paid with usury is the end of reproach. This may win your good-nature on behalf of my present essay, which has turned out far more detailed and circumstantial than I had at first intended.

"It is from yourself that the subject is taken. Our intercourse has been short, too short both for you and me; but the first time I saw you, the affinity of our spirits was revealed to me: your culture proved that my hope was not groundless; and I found in a beautiful body a soul created for nobleness, gifted with the sense of beauty. My parting from you was therefore one of the most painful in my life; and that this feeling continues our common friend is witness, for your separation from me leaves me no hope of seeing you again. Let this essay be a memorial to our friendship, which, on my side, is free from every selfish motive, and ever remains subject and dedicate to yourself alone."

The following passage is characteristic—

"As it is confessedly the beauty of man which is to be conceived under one general idea, so I have noticed that those who are observant of beauty only in women, and are moved little or not at all by the beauty of men, seldom have an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art. To such persons the beauty of Greek art will ever seem wanting, because its supreme beauty is rather male than female. But the beauty of art demands a higher sensibility than the beauty of nature, because the beauty of art, like tears shed at a play, gives no pain, is without life, and must be awakened and repaired by culture. Now, as the spirit of culture is much more ardent in youth than in manhood, the instinct of which I am speaking must be exercised and directed to what is beautiful, before that age is reached, at which one would be afraid to confess that one had no taste for it."

Certainly, of that beauty of living form which regulated Winckelmann's friendships, it could not be said that it gave no pain. One notable friendship, the fortune of which we may trace through his letters, begins with an antique, chivalrous letter in French, and ends noisily in a burst of angry fire. Far from reaching the quietism, the bland indifference of art, such attachments are nevertheless more susceptible than any others of equal strength of a purely intellectual culture. Of passion, of physical excitement, they contain only just so much as stimulates the eye to the finest delicacies of colour and form. These friendships, often the caprices of a moment, make Winckelmann's letters, with their troubled colouring, an instructive but bizarre addition to the *History of Art*, that shrine of grave and mellow light around the mute Olympian family. The impression which Winckelmann's literary life conveyed to those about him was that of excitement, intuition, inspiration, rather than the contemplative evolution of general principles. The quick, susceptible enthusiast, betraying his temperament even in appearance, by his olive complexion, his deep-seated, piercing eyes, his rapid movements, apprehended the subtlest principles of the Hellenic manner, not through the understanding, but by instinct or touch. A German biographer of Winckelmann has compared him to Columbus. That is not the aptest of comparisons; but it reminds one of a passage in which Edgar Quinet describes the great discoverer's famous voyage. His science was often at fault; but he had a way of estimating at once the slightest indication of land, in a floating weed or passing bird; he seemed actually to come nearer to nature than other men. And that world in which others had moved with so much embarrassment, seems to call out in Winckelmann new senses fitted to deal with it. He is in touch with it; it penetrates him, and becomes part of his temperament. He remodels his writings with constant renewal of insight; he catches the thread of a whole sequence of laws in some hollowing of the hand, or dividing of the hair; he seems to realise that fancy of the reminiscence of a forgotten knowledge hidden for a time in the mind itself; as if the mind of one, lover and philosopher at once in some phase of pre-existence—*φιλοσοφήσας πότε μέτ' ἔρωτος*—fallen into a new cycle, were beginning its intellectual career over again, yet with a certain power of anticipating its results. So comes the truth of Goethe's judgments on his works; they are a life, a living thing, designed for those who are alive—*ein Lebendiges für die Lebendigen geschrieben ein Leben selbst*.

In 1758 Cardinal Albani, who had formed in his Roman villa a precious collection of antiquities, became Winckelmann's patron. Pompeii had just opened its treasures; Winckelmann gathered its first-fruits. But his plan of a visit to Greece remained unfulfilled. From

his first arrival in Rome he had kept the *History of Ancient Art* ever in view. All his other writings were a preparation for that. It appeared, finally, in 1764; but even after its publication Winckelmann was still employed in perfecting it. It is since his time that many of the most significant examples of Greek art have been submitted to criticism. He had seen little or nothing of what we ascribe to the age of Pheidias; and his conception of Greek art tends, therefore, to put the mere elegance of the imperial society of ancient Rome in place of the severe and chastened grace of the *palaestra*. For the most part he had to penetrate to Greek art through copies, imitations, and later Roman art itself; and it is not surprising that this turbid medium has left in Winckelmann's actual results much that a more privileged criticism can correct.

He had been twelve years in Rome. Admiring Germany had made many calls to him. At last, in 1768, he set out to revisit the country of his birth; and as he left Rome, a strange, inverted home-sickness, a strange reluctance to leave it at all, came over him. He reached Vienna. There he was loaded with honours and presents; other cities were awaiting him. Goethe, then nineteen years old, studying art at Leipsic, was expecting his coming, with that wistful eagerness which marked his youth, when the news of Winckelmann's murder arrived. All his "weariness of the North" had revived with double force. He left Vienna, intending to hasten back to Rome, and at Trieste a delay of a few days occurred. With characteristic openness, Winckelmann had confided his plans to a fellow-traveller, a man named Arcangeli, and had shown him the gold medals received at Vienna. Arcangeli's avarice was aroused. One morning he entered Winckelmann's room, under pretence of taking leave. Winckelmann was then writing "memoranda for the future editor of the *History of Art*", still seeking the perfection of his great work. Arcangeli begged to see the medals once more. As Winckelmann stooped down to take them from the chest, a cord was thrown round his neck. Some time afterwards, a child with whose companionship Winckelmann had beguiled his delay, knocked at the door, and receiving no answer, gave the alarm. Winckelmann was found dangerously wounded, and died a few hours later, after receiving the last sacraments. It seemed as if the gods, in reward for his devotion to them, had given him a death which, for its swiftness and its opportunity, he might well have desired. "He has," says Goethe, "the advantage of figuring in the memory of posterity, as one eternally able and strong; for the image in which one leaves the world is that in which one moves among the shadows." Yet, perhaps, it is not fanciful to regret that his proposed meeting with Goethe never took place. Goethe, then in all the pregnancy of his

wonderful youth, still unruffled by the "press and storm" of his earlier manhood, was awaiting Winckelmann with a curiosity of the worthiest kind. As it was, Winckelmann became to him something like what Virgil was to Dante. And Winckelmann, with his fiery friendships, had reached that age and that period of culture at which emotions hitherto fitful, sometimes concentrate themselves in a vital, unchangeable relationship. German literary history seems to have lost the chance of one of those famous friendships, the very tradition of which becomes a stimulus to culture, and exercises an imperishable influence.

In one of the frescoes of the Vatican, Raphael has commemorated the tradition of the Catholic religion. Against a space of tranquil sky, broken in upon by the beatific vision, are ranged the great personages of Christian history, with the Sacrament in the midst. Another fresco of Raphael in the same apartment presents a very different company, Dante alone appearing in both. Surrounded by the muses of Greek mythology, under a thicket of laurel, sits Apollo, with the sources of Castalia at his feet. On either side are grouped those on whom the spirit of Apollo descended, the classical and Renaissance poets, to whom the waters of Castalia come down, a river making glad this other "city of God". In this fresco it is the classical tradition, the orthodoxy of taste, that Raphael commemorates. Winckelmann's intellectual history authenticates the claims of this tradition in human culture. In the countries where that tradition arose, where it still lurked about its own artistic relics, and changes of language had not broken its continuity, national pride might sometimes light up anew an enthusiasm for it. Aliens might imitate that enthusiasm, and classicism become from time to time an intellectual fashion. But Winckelmann was not further removed by language, than by local aspects and associations, from those vestiges of the classical spirit; and he lived at a time when, in Germany, classical studies were out of favour. Yet, remote in time and place, he feels after the Hellenic world, divines those channels of ancient art, in which its life still circulates, and, like Scyles, the half-barbarous yet Hellenising king, in the beautiful story of Herodotus, is irresistibly attracted by it. This testimony to the authority of the Hellenic tradition, its fitness to satisfy some vital requirement of the intellect, which Winckelmann contributes as a solitary man of genius, is offered also by the general history of the mind. The spiritual forces of the past, which have prompted and informed the culture of a succeeding age, live, indeed, within that culture, but with an absorbed, underground life. The Hellenic element alone has not been so absorbed, or content with this underground life; from time to time it has started to the surface; culture has been drawn

back to its sources to be clarified and corrected. Hellenism is not merely an absorbed element in our intellectual life; it is a conscious tradition in it.

Again, individual genius works ever under conditions of time and place; its products are coloured by the varying aspects of nature, and type of human form, and outward manners of life. There is thus an element of change in art; criticism must never for a moment forget that "the artist is the child of his time". But besides these conditions of time and place, and independent of them, there is also an element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses. This standard is maintained in a purely intellectual tradition. It acts upon the artist, not as one of the influences of his own age, but through those artistic products of the previous generation which first excited, while they directed into a particular channel, his sense of beauty. The supreme artistic products of succeeding generations thus form a series of elevated points, taking each from each the reflexion of a strange light, the source of which is not in the atmosphere around and above them, but in a stage of society remote from ours. The standard of taste, then, was fixed in Greece, at a definite historical period. A tradition for all succeeding generations, it originates in a spontaneous growth out of the influences of Greek society. What were the conditions under which this ideal, this standard of artistic orthodoxy, was generated? How was Greece enabled to force its thought upon Europe?

Greek art, when we first catch sight of it, is entangled with Greek religion. We are accustomed to think of Greek religion as the religion of art and beauty, the religion of which the Olympian Zeus and the Athena Polias are the idols, the poems of Homer the sacred books. Thus Cardinal Newman speaks of "the classical polytheism which was gay and graceful, as was natural in a civilised age". Yet such a view is only a partial one. In it the eye is fixed on the sharp, bright edge of high Hellenic culture, but loses sight of the sombre world across which it strikes. Greek religion, where we can observe it most distinctly, is at once a magnificent ritualistic system, and a cycle of poetical conceptions. Religions, as they grow by natural laws out of man's life, are modified by whatever modifies his life. They brighten under a bright sky, they become liberal as the social range widens, they grow intense and shrill in the clefts of human life, where the spirit is narrow and confined, and the stars are visible at noonday; and a fine analysis of these differences is one of the gravest functions of religious criticism. Still, the broad foundation, in mere human nature, of all religions as they exist for the greatest number, is a universal pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered

far onward into the Christian world, ineradicable, like some persistent vegetable growth, because its seed is an element of the very soil out of which it springs.

This pagan sentiment measures the sadness with which the human mind is filled, whenever its thoughts wander far from what is here, and now. It is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most part ranged against man, but the secret also of his fortune, making the earth golden and the grape fiery for him. He makes gods in his own image, gods smiling and flower-crowned, or bleeding by some sad fatality, to console him by their wounds, never closed from generation to generation. It is with a rush of home-sickness that the thought of death presents itself. He would remain at home for ever on the earth if he could. As it loses its colour and the senses fail, he clings ever closer to it; but since the mouldering of bones and flesh must go on to the end, he is careful for charms and talismans, which may chance to have some friendly power in them, when the inevitable shipwreck comes. Such sentiment is a part of the eternal basis of all religions, modified indeed by changes of time and place, but indestructible, because its root is so deep in the earth of man's nature. The breath of religious initiators passes over them; a few "rise up with wings as eagles", but the broad level of religious life is not permanently changed. Religious progress, like all purely spiritual progress, is confined to a few. This sentiment attaches itself in the earliest times to certain usages of patriarchal life, the kindling of fire, the washing of the body, the slaughter of the flock, the gathering of harvest, holidays and dances. Here are the beginnings of a ritual, at first as occasional and unfixed as the sentiment which it expresses, but destined to become the permanent element of religious life. The usages of patriarchal life change; but this germ of ritual remains, promoted now with a consciously religious motive, losing its domestic character, and therefore becoming more and more inexplicable with each generation. Such pagan worship, in spite of local variations, essentially one, is an element in all religions. It is the anodyne which the religious principle, like one administering opiates to the incurable, has added to the law which makes life sombre for the vast majority of mankind.

More definite religious conceptions come from other sources, and fix themselves upon this ritual in various ways, changing it, and giving it new meanings. In Greece they were derived from mythology, itself not due to a religious source at all, but developing in the course of time into a body of religious conceptions, entirely human in form and character. To the unprogressive ritual element it brought these conceptions, itself—*ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις*, the power of the wing—an element of refinement, of ascension, with the promise of an endless

destiny. While the ritual remains unchanged, the æsthetic element, only accidentally connected with it, expands with the freedom and mobility of the things of the intellect. Always, the fixed element is the religious observance; the fluid, unfixed element is the myth, the religious conception. This religion is itself pagan, and has in any broad view of it the pagan sadness. It does not at once, and for the majority, become the higher Hellenic religion. The country people, of course, cherish the unlovely idols of an earlier time, such as those which Pausanias found still devoutly preserved in Arcadia. Athenæus tells the story of one who, coming to a temple of Latona, had expected to find some worthy presentment of the mother of Apollo, and laughed on seeing only a shapeless wooden figure. The wilder people have wilder gods, which, however, in Athens, or Corinth, or Lacedæmon, changing ever with the worshippers in whom they live and move and have their being, borrow something of the lordliness and distinction of human nature there. Greek religion too has its mendicants, its purifications, its antinomian mysticism, its garments offered to the gods, its statues worn with kissing, its exaggerated superstitions for the vulgar only, its worship of sorrow, its *addolorata*, its mournful mysteries. Scarcely a wild or melancholy note of the medieval church but was anticipated by Greek polytheism! What should we have thought of the vertiginous prophetess at the very centre of Greek religion? The supreme Hellenic culture is a sharp edge of light across this gloom. The fiery, stupefying wine becomes in a happier climate clear and exhilarating. The Dorian worship of Apollo, rational, chastened, debonair, with his unbroken daylight, always opposed to the sad Chthonian divinities, is the aspiring element, by force and spring of which Greek religion sublimates itself. Out of Greek religion, under happy conditions, arises Greek art, to minister to human culture. It was the privilege of Greek religion to be able to transform itself into an artistic ideal.

For the thoughts of the Greeks about themselves, and their relation to the world generally, were ever in the happiest readiness to be transformed into objects for the senses. In this lies the main distinction between Greek art and the mystical art of the Christian middle age, which is always struggling to express thoughts beyond itself. Take, for instance, a characteristic work of the middle age, Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin*, in the cloister of *Saint Mark's* at Florence. In some strange halo of a moon Jesus and the Virgin Mother are seated, clad in mystical white raiment, half shroud, half priestly linen. Jesus, with rosy nimbus and the long pale hair—*tanquam lana alba et tanquam nix*—of the figure in the Apocalypse; with slender finger-tips is setting a crown of pearl on the head of Mary, who, corpse-like in her refine-

ment, is bending forward to receive it, the light lying like snow upon her forehead. Certainly, it cannot be said of Angelico's fresco that it throws into a sensible form our highest thoughts about man and his relation to the world; but it did not do this adequately even for Angelico. For him, all that is outward or sensible in his work—the hair like wool, the rosy nimbus, the crown of pearl—is only the symbol or type of a really inexpressible world, to which he wishes to direct the thoughts; he would have shrunk from the notion that what the eye apprehended was all. Such forms of art, then, are inadequate to the matter they clothe; they remain ever below its level. Something of this kind is true also of oriental art. As in the middle age from an exaggerated inwardness, so in the East from a vagueness, a want of definition, in thought, the matter presented to art is unmanageable, and the forms of sense struggle vainly with it. The many-headed gods of the East, the orientalised, many-breasted Diana of Ephesus, like Angelico's fresco, are at best overcharged symbols, a means of hinting at an idea which art cannot fitly or completely express, which still remains in the world of shadows.

But take a work of Greek art,—the Venus of Melos. That is in no sense a symbol, a suggestion, of anything beyond its own victorious fairness. The mind begins and ends with the finite image, yet loses no part of the spiritual motive. That motive is not lightly and loosely attached to the sensuous form, as its meaning to an allegory, but saturates and is identical with it. The Greek mind had advanced to a particular stage of self-reflexion, but was careful not to pass beyond it. In oriental thought there is a vague conception of life everywhere, but no true appreciation of itself by the mind, no knowledge of the distinction of man's nature: in its consciousness of itself, humanity is still confused with the fantastic, indeterminate life of the animal and vegetable world. In Greek thought, on the other hand, the "lordship of the soul" is recognised; that lordship gives authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet; inanimate nature is thrown into the background. But just there Greek thought finds its happy limit; it has not yet become too inward; the mind has not yet learned to boast its independence of the flesh; the spirit has not yet absorbed everything with its emotions, nor reflected its own colour everywhere. It has indeed committed itself to a train of reflexion which must end in defiance of form, of all that is outward, in an exaggerated idealism. But that end is still distant: it has not yet plunged into the depths of religious mysticism.

This ideal art, in which the thought does not outstrip or lie beyond the proper range of its sensible embodiment, could not have arisen out of a phase of life that was uncomely or poor. That delicate pause

in Greek reflexion was joined, by some supreme good luck, to the perfect animal nature of the Greeks. Here are the two conditions of an artistic ideal. The influences which perfected the animal nature of the Greeks are part of the process by which "the ideal" was evolved. Those "Mothers" who, in the second part of *Faust*, mould and remould the typical forms that appear in human history, preside, at the beginning of Greek culture, over such a concourse of happy physical conditions as ever generates by natural laws some rare type of intellectual or spiritual life. That delicate air, "nimble and sweetly recommending itself" to the senses, the finer aspects of nature, the finer lime and clay of the human form, and modelling of the dainty framework of the human countenance:—these are the good luck of the Greek when he enters upon life. Beauty becomes a distinction, like genius, or noble place.

"By no people," says Winckelmann, "has beauty been so highly esteemed as by the Greeks. The priests of a youthful Jupiter at Ægæ, of the Ismenian Apollo, and the priest who at Tanagra led the procession of Mercury, bearing a lamb upon his shoulders, were always youths to whom the prize of beauty had been awarded. The citizens of Egesta erected a monument to a certain Philip, who was not their fellow-citizen, but of Croton, for his distinguished beauty; and the people made offerings at it. In an ancient song, ascribed to Simonides or Epicharmus, of four wishes, the first was health, the second beauty. And as beauty was so longed for and prized by the Greeks, every beautiful person sought to become known to the whole people by this distinction, and above all to approve himself to the artists, because they awarded the prize; and this was for the artists an occasion for having supreme beauty ever before their eyes. Beauty even gave a right to fame; and we find in Greek histories the most beautiful people distinguished. Some were famous for the beauty of one single part of their form; as Demetrius Phalereus, for his beautiful eyebrows, was called *Charito-blepharos*. It seems even to have been thought that the procreation of beautiful children might be promoted by prizes. This is shown by the existence of contests for beauty, which in ancient times were established by Cypselus, King of Arcadia, by the river Alpheus; and, at the feast of Apollo of Philæ, a prize was offered to the youths for the deffest kiss. This was decided by an umpire; as also at Megara, by the grave of Diocles. At Sparta, and at Lesbos, in the temple of Juno, and among the Parrhasii, there were contests for beauty among women. The general esteem for beauty went so far, that the Spartan women set up in their bedchambers a Nireus, a Narcissus, or a Hyacinth, that they might bear beautiful children."

So, from a few stray antiquarianisms, a few faces cast up sharply

from the waves, Winckelmann, as his manner was, divines the temperament of the antique world, and that in which it had delight. It has passed away with that distant age, and we may venture to swell upon it. What sharpness and reality it has is the sharpness and reality of suddenly arrested life. The Greek system of gymnastics originated as part of a religious ritual. The worshipper was to recommend himself to the gods by becoming fleet and fair, white and red, like them. The beauty of the *palaestra*, and the beauty of the artist's workshop, reacted on one another. The youth tried to rival his gods; and his increased beauty passed back into them.—“I take the gods to witness, I had rather have a fair body than a king's crown”—“Ομνυμι πάντας θεούς μὴ ἐλέσθαι ἂν τὴν βασιλείας ἀρχὴν ἀντὶ τοῦ καλὸς εἶναι.—That is the form in which one age of the world chose the higher life.—A perfect world, if the gods could have seemed for ever only fleet and fair, white and red! Let us not regret that this unperplexed youth of humanity, satisfied with the vision of itself, passed, at the due moment, into a mournful maturity; for already the deep joy was in store for the spirit, of finding the ideal of that youth still red with life in the grave.

If followed that the Greek ideal expressed itself pre-eminently in sculpture. All art has a sensuous element, colour, form, sound—in poetry a dexterous recalling of these, together with the profound, joyful sensuousness of motion, and each of them may be a medium for the ideal: it is partly accident which in any individual case makes the born artist, poet, or painter rather than sculptor. But as the mind itself has had a historical development, one form of art, by the very limitations of its material, may be more adequate than another for the expression of any one phase of that development. Different attitudes of the imagination have a native affinity with different types of sensuous form, so that they combine together, with completeness and ease. The arts may thus be ranged in a series, which corresponds to a series of developments in the human mind itself. Architecture, which begins in a practical need, can only express by vague hint or symbol the spirit or mind of the artist. He closes his sadness over him, or wanders in the perplexed intricacies of things, or projects his purpose from him clean-cut and sincere, or bares himself to the sunlight. But these spiritualities, felt rather than seen, can but lurk about architectural form as volatile effects, to be gathered from it by reflexion; their expression is, indeed, not really sensuous at all. As human form is not the subject with which it deals, architecture is the mode in which the artistic effort centres, when the thoughts of man concerning himself are still indistinct, when he is still little preoccupied with those harmonies, storms, victories, of the unseen and intellectual world,

which, wrought out into the bodily form, give it an interest and significance communicable to it alone. The art of Egypt, with its supreme architectural effects, is, according to Hegel's beautiful comparison, a Memnon waiting for the day, the day of the Greek spirit, the humanistic spirit, with its power of speech.

Again, painting, music, and poetry, with their endless power of complexity, are the special arts of the romantic and modern ages. Into these, with the utmost attenuation of detail, may be translated every delicacy of thought and feeling, incidental to a consciousness brooding with delight over itself. Through their gradations of shade, their exquisite intervals, they project in an external form that which is most inward in passion or sentiment. Between architecture and those romantic arts of painting, music, and poetry, comes sculpture, which, unlike architecture, deals immediately with man, while it contrasts with the romantic arts, because it is not self-analytical. It has to do more exclusively than any other art with the human form, itself one entire medium of spiritual expression, trembling, blushing, melting into dew, with inward excitement. That spirituality which only lurks about architecture as a volatile effect, in sculpture takes up the whole given material, and penetrates it with an imaginative motive; and at first sight sculpture, with its solidity of form, seems a thing more real and full than the faint, abstract world of poetry or painting. Still the fact is the reverse. Discourse and action show man as he is, more directly than the play of the muscles and the moulding of the flesh; and over these poetry has command. Painting, by the flushing of colour in the face and dilatation of light in the eye—music, by its subtle range of tones—can refine most delicately upon a single moment of passion, unravelling its subtlest threads.

But why should sculpture thus limit itself to pure form? Because, by this limitation, it becomes a perfect medium of expression for one peculiar motive of the imaginative intellect. It therefore renounces all those attributes of its material which do not forward that motive. It has had, indeed, from the beginning an unfixed claim to colour; but this element of colour in it has always been more or less conventional, with no melting or modulation of tones, never permitting more than a very limited realism. It was maintained chiefly as a religious tradition. In proportion as the art of sculpture ceased to be merely decorative, and subordinate to architecture, it threw itself upon pure form. It renounces the power of expression by lower or heightened tones. In it, no member of the human form is more significant than the rest; the eye is wide, and without pupil; the lips and brow are hardly less significant than hands, and breasts, and feet. But the limitation of its resources is part of its pride: it has no backgrounds,

no sky or atmosphere, to suggest and interpret a train of feeling; a little of suggested motion, and much of pure light on its gleaming surfaces, with pure form—only these. And it gains more than it loses by this limitation to its own distinguishing motives; it unveils man in the repose of his unchanging characteristics. That white light, purged from the angry, bloodlike stains of action and passion, reveals, not what is accidental in man, but the tranquil godship in him, as opposed to the restless accidents of life. The art of sculpture records the first naïve, unperplexed recognition of man by himself; and it is a proof of the high artistic capacity of the Greeks, that they apprehended and remained true to these exquisite limitations, yet, in spite of them, gave to their creations a mobile, a vital, individuality.

Heiterkeit—blitheness or repose, and *Allgemeinheit*—generality or breadth, are, then, the supreme characteristics of the Hellenic ideal. But that generality or breadth has nothing in common with the lax observation, the unlearned thought, the flaccid execution, which have sometimes claimed superiority in art, on the plea of being “broad” or “general”. Hellenic breadth and generality come of a culture minute, severe, constantly renewed, rectifying and concentrating its impressions into certain pregnant types.

The basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of conceiving humanity in a new and striking way, of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days, generating around itself an atmosphere with a novel power of refraction, selecting, transforming, recombining the images it transmits, according to the choice of the imaginative intellect. In exercising this power, painting and poetry have a variety of subject almost unlimited. The range of characters or persons open to them is as various as life itself; no character, however trivial, misshapen, or unlovely, can resist their magic. That is because those arts can accomplish their function in the choice and development of some special situation, which lifts or glorifies a character, in itself not poetical. To realise this situation, to define, in a chill and empty atmosphere, the focus where rays, in themselves pale and impotent, unite and begin to burn, the artist may have, indeed, to employ the most cunning detail, to complicate and refine upon thought and passion a thousand-fold. Let us take a brilliant example from the poems of Robert Browning. His poetry is pre-eminently the poetry of situations. The characters themselves are always of secondary importance; often they are characters in themselves of little interest; they seem to come to him by strange accidents from the ends of the world. His gift is shown by the way in which he accepts such a character, throws it into some situation, or apprehends it in some delicate pause of life, in which for a moment it

becomes ideal. In the poem entitled *Le Byron de nos Jours*, in his *Dramatis Personae*, we have a single moment of passion thrown into relief after this exquisite fashion. Those two jaded Parisians are not intrinsically interesting: they begin to interest us only when thrown into a choice situation. But to discriminate that moment, to make it appreciable by us, that we may "find" it, what a cobweb of allusions, what double and treble reflexions of the mind upon itself, what an artificial light is constructed and broken over the chosen situation; on how fine a needle's point that little world of passion is balanced! Yet, in spite of this intricacy, the poem has the clear ring of a central motive. We receive from it the impression of one imaginative tone, of a single creative act.

To produce such effects at all requires all the resources of painting, with its power of indirect expression, of subordinate but significant detail, its atmosphere, its foregrounds and backgrounds. To produce them in a pre-eminent degree requires all the resources of poetry, language in its most purged form, its remote associations and suggestions, its double and treble lights. These appliances sculpture cannot command. In it, therefore, not the special situation, but the type, the general character of the subject to be delineated, is all-important. In poetry and painting, the situation predominates over the character; in sculpture, the character over the situation. Excluded by the proper limitation of its material from the development of exquisite situations, it has to choose from a select number of types intrinsically interesting—interesting, that is, independently of any special situation into which they may be thrown. Sculpture finds the secret of its power in presenting these types, in their broad, central, incisive lines. This it effects not by accumulation of detail, but by abstracting from it. All that is accidental, all that distracts the simple effect upon us of the supreme types of humanity, all traces in them of the commonness of the world, it gradually purges away.

Works of art produced under this law, and only these, are really characterised by Hellenic generality or breadth. In every direction it is a law of restraint. It keeps passion always below that degree of intensity at which it must necessarily be transitory, never winding up the features to one note of anger, or desire, or surprise. In some of the feebler allegorical designs of the middle age, we find isolated qualities portrayed as by so many masks; its religious art has familiarised us with faces fixed immovably into blank types of placid reverie. Men and women, again, in the hurry of life, often wear the sharp impress of one absorbing motive, from which it is said death sets their features free. All such instances may be ranged under the *grotesque*; and the Hellenic ideal has nothing in common with the grotesque. It allows

passion to play lightly over the surface of the individual form, losing thereby nothing of its central impassivity, its depth and repose. To all but the highest culture, the reserved faces of the gods will ever have something of insipidity.

Again, in the best Greek sculpture, the archaic immobility has been stirred, its forms are in motion; but it is a motion ever kept in reserve, and very seldom committed to any definite action. Endless as are the attitudes of Greek sculpture, exquisite as is the invention of the Greeks in this direction, the actions or situations it permits are simple and few. There is no Greek Madonna; the goddesses are always childless. The actions selected are those which would be without significance, except in a divine person—binding on a sandal or preparing for the bath. When a more complex and significant action is permitted, it is most often represented as just finished, so that eager expectancy is excluded, as in the image of Apollo just after the slaughter of the Python, or of Venus with the apple of Paris already in her hand. The *Laocoon*, with all that patient science through which it has triumphed over an almost unmanageable subject, marks a period in which sculpture has begun to aim at effects legitimate, because delightful, only in painting.

The hair, so rich a source of expression in painting, because, relatively to the eye or the lip, it is mere drapery, is withdrawn from attention; its texture, as well as its colour, is lost, its arrangement but faintly and severely indicated, with no broken or enmeshed light. The eyes are wide and directionless, not fixing anything with their gaze, nor riveting the brain to any special external object, the brows without hair. Again, Greek sculpture deals almost exclusively with youth, where the moulding of the bodily organs is still as if suspended between growth and completion, indicated but not emphasised; where the transition from curve to curve is so delicate and elusive, that Winckelmann compares it to a quiet sea, which, although we understand it to be in motion, we nevertheless regard as an image of repose; where, therefore, the exact degree of development is so hard to apprehend. If a single product only of Hellenic art, were to be saved in the wreck of all beside, one might choose perhaps from the "beautiful multitude" of the Panathenaic frieze, that line of youths on horseback, with their level glances, their proud, patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service. This colourless, unclassified purity of life, with its blending and interpenetration of intellectual, spiritual, and physical elements, still folded together, pregnant with the possibilities of a whole world closed within it, is the highest expression of the indifference which lies beyond all that is relative or partial. Everywhere there is the effect of an awakening,

of a child's sleep just disturbed. All these effects are united in a single instance—the *adorante* of the museum of Berlin, a youth who has gained the wrestler's prize, with hands lifted and open, in praise for the victory. Fresh, unperplexed, it is the image of a man as he springs first from the sleep of nature, his white light taking no colour from any one-sided experience. He is characterless, so far as *character* involves subjection to the accidental influences of life.

"This sense," says Hegel, "for the consummate modelling of divine and human forms was pre-eminently at home in Greece. In its poets and orators, its historians and philosophers, Greece cannot be conceived from a central point, unless one brings, as a key to the understanding of it, an insight into the ideal forms of sculpture, and regards the images of statesmen and philosophers, as well as epic and dramatic heroes, from the artistic point of view; for those who act, as well as those who create and think, have, in those beautiful days of Greece, this plastic character. They are great and free, and have grown up on the soil of their own individuality, creating themselves out of themselves, and moulding themselves to what they were, and willed to be. The age of Pericles was rich in such characters; Pericles himself, Pheidias, Plato, above all Sophocles, Thucydides also, Xenophon and Socrates, each in his own order, the perfection of one remaining undiminished by that of the others. They are ideal artists of themselves, cast each in one flawless mould, works of art, which stand before us as an immortal presentment of the gods. Of this modelling also are those bodily works of art, the victors in the Olympic games; yes! and even Phryne, who, as the most beautiful of women, ascended naked out of the water, in the presence of assembled Greece."

This key to the understanding of the Greek spirit, Winckelmann possessed in his own nature, itself like a relic of classical antiquity, laid open by accident to our alien, modern atmosphere. To the criticism of that consummate Greek modelling he brought not only his culture but his temperament. We have seen how definite was the leading motive of that culture; how, like some central root-fibre, it maintained the well-rounded unity of his life through a thousand distractions. Interests not his, nor meant for him, never disturbed him. In morals, as in criticism, he followed the clue of instinct, of an unerring instinct. Penetrating into the antique world by his passion, his temperament, he enunciated no formal principles, always hard and one-sided. Minute and anxious as his culture was, he never became one-sidedly self-analytical. Occupied ever with himself, perfecting himself and developing his genius, he was not content, as so often happens with such natures, that the atmosphere between him and other minds should be thick and clouded; he was ever jealously refining

his meaning into a form, express, clear, objective. This temperament he nurtured and invigorated by friendships which kept him always in direct contact with the spirit of youth. The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty: the statues of the gods had the least traces of sex. Here there is a moral sexlessness, a kind of ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a true beauty and significance of its own.

One result of this temperament is a serenity—*Heiterkeit*—which characterises Winckelmann's handling of the sensuous side of Greek art. This serenity is, perhaps, in great measure, a negative quality: it is the absence of any sense of want, or corruption, or shame. With the sensuous element in Greek art he deals in the pagan manner; and what is implied in that? It has been sometimes said that art is a means of escape from "the tyranny of the senses". It may be so for the spectator: he may find that the spectacle of supreme works of art takes from the life of the senses something of its turbid fever. But this is possible for the spectator only because the artist, in producing those works, has gradually sunk his intellectual and spiritual ideas in sensuous form. He may live, as Keats lived, a pure life; but his soul, like that of Plato's false astronomer, becomes more and more immersed in sense, until nothing which lacks the appeal to sense has interest for him. How could such an one ever again endure the greyiness of the ideal or spiritual world? The spiritualist is satisfied as he watches the escape of the sensuous elements from his conceptions; his interest grows, as the dyed garment bleaches in the keener air. But the artist steepes his thought again and again into the fire of colour. To the Greek this immersion in the sensuous was, religiously at least, indifferent. Greek sensuousness, therefore, does not fever the conscience: it is shameless and childlike. Christian asceticism, on the other hand, discrediting the slightest touch of sense, has from time to time provoked into strong emphasis the contrast or antagonism to itself, of the artistic life, with its inevitable sensuousness.—*I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo! I must die.*—It has sometimes seemed hard to pursue that life without something of conscious disavowal of a spiritual world; and this imparts to genuine artistic interests a kind of intoxication. From this intoxication Winckelmann is free: he fingers those pagan marbles with unsinged hands, with no sense of shame or loss. That is to deal with the sensuous side of art in the pagan manner.

The longer we contemplate that Hellenic ideal, in which man is at unity with himself, with his physical nature, with the outward world, the more we may be inclined to regret that he should ever have passed beyond it, to contend for a perfection that makes the blood turbid, and frets the flesh, and discredits the actual world about

us. But if he was to be saved from the *ennui* which ever attaches itself to realisation, even the realisation of the perfect life, it was necessary that a conflict should come, that some sharper note should grieve the existing harmony, and the spirit chafed by it beat out at last only a larger and profounder music. In Greek tragedy this conflict has begun: man finds himself face to face with rival claims. Greek tragedy shows how such a conflict may be treated with serenity, how the evolution of it may be a spectacle of the dignity, not of the impotence, of the human spirit. But it is not only in tragedy that the Greek spirit showed itself capable of thus bringing joy out of matter in itself full of discouragements. Theocritus too, strikes often a note of romantic sadness. But what a blithe and steady poise, above these discouragements, in a clear and sunny stratum of the air!

Into this stage of Greek achievement Winckelmann did not enter. Supreme as he is where his true interest lay, his insight into the typical unity and repose of the highest sort of sculpture seems to have involved limitation in another direction. His conception of art excludes that bolder type of it which deals confidently and serenely with life, conflict, evil. Living in a world of exquisite but abstract and colourless form, he could hardly have conceived of the subtle and penetrative, yet somewhat grotesque art of the modern world. What would he have thought of Gilliatt, in Victor Hugo's *Travailleurs de la Mer*, or of the bleeding mouth of Fantine in the first part of *Les Misérables*, penetrated as those books are with a sense of beauty, as lively and transparent as that of a Greek? Nay, a sort of preparation for the romantic temper is noticeable even within the limits of the Greek ideal itself, which for his part Winckelmann failed to see. For Greek religion has not merely its mournful mysteries of Adonis, of Hyacinthus, of Demeter, but it is conscious also of the fall of earlier divine dynasties. Hyperion gives way to Apollo, Oceanus to Poseidon. Around the feet of that tranquil Olympian family still crowd the weary shadows of an earlier, more formless, divine world. The placid minds even of Olympian gods are troubled with thoughts of a limit to duration, of inevitable decay, of dispossession. Again, the supreme and colourless abstraction of those divine forms, which is the secret of their repose, is also a premonition of the fleshless, consumptive refinements of the pale, medieval artists. That high indifference to the outward, that impassivity, has already a touch of the corpse in it: we see already Angelico and the *Master of the Passion* in the artistic future. The suppression of the sensuous, the shutting of the door upon it, the ascetic interest, may be even now foreseen. Those abstracted gods, "ready to melt out their essence fine into the winds", who can fold up their flesh as a garment, and still remain themselves, seem

already to feel that bleak air, in which, like Helen of Troy, they wander as the spectres of the middle age.

Gradually, as the world came into the church, an artistic interest, native in the human soul, reasserted its claims. But Christian art was still dependent on pagan examples, building the shafts of pagan temples into its churches, perpetuating the form of the *basilica*, in later times working the disused amphitheatres as stone quarries. The sensuous expression of ideas which unreservedly discredit the world of sense, was the delicate problem which Christian art had before it. If we think of medieval painting, as it ranges from the early German schools, still with something of the air of the charnel-house about them, to the clear loveliness of Perugino, we shall see how that problem was solved. In the very "worship of sorrow" the native blitheness of art asserted itself. The religious spirit, as Hegel says, "smiled through its tears". So perfectly did the young Raphael infuse that *Heiterkeit*, that pagan blitheness, into religious works, that his picture of Saint Agatha at Bologna became to Goethe a step in the evolution of *Iphigenie*.* But in proportion as the gift of smiling was found once more, there came also an aspiration towards that lost antique art, some relics of which Christian art had buried in itself, ready to work wonders when their day came.

The history of art has suffered as much as any history by trenchant and absolute divisions. Pagan and Christian art are sometimes harshly opposed, and the Renaissance is represented as a fashion which set in at a definite period. That is the superficial view: the deeper view is that which preserves the identity of European culture. The two are really continuous; and there is a sense in which it may be said that the Renaissance was an uninterrupted effort of the middle age, that it was ever taking place. When the actual relics of the antique were restored to the world, in the view of the Christian ascetic it was as if an ancient plague-pit had been opened. All the world took the contagion of the life of nature and of the senses. And now it was seen that the medieval spirit too had done something for the new fortunes of the antique. By hastening the decline of art, by withdrawing interest from it and yet keeping unbroken the thread of its traditions, it has suffered the human mind to repose itself, that when day came it might awake, with eyes refreshed, to those ancient, ideal forms.

The aim of a right criticism is to place Winckelmann in an intellectual perspective, of which Goethe is the foreground. For, after all, he is infinitely less than Goethe; and it is chiefly because at certain points

* *Italiänische Reise*. Bologna, 19 Oct. 1776. [W.P.]

he comes in contact with Goethe, that criticism entertains consideration of him. His relation to modern culture is a peculiar one. He is not of the modern world; nor is he wholly of the eighteenth century, although so much of his outer life is characteristic of it. But that note of revolt against the eighteenth century, which we detect in Goethe, was struck by Winckelmann. Goethe illustrates a union of the Romantic spirit, in its adventure, its variety, its profound subjectivity of soul, with Hellenism, in its transparency, its rationality, its desire of beauty—that marriage of Faust and Helena, of which the art of then ineteenth century is the child, the beautiful lad Euphorion, as Goethe conceives him, on the crags, in the “splendour of battle and in harness as for victory”, his brows bound with light.* Goethe illustrates, too, the preponderance in this marriage of the Hellenic element; and that element, in its true essence, was made known to him by Winckelmann.

Breadth, centrality, with blitheness and repose, are the marks of Hellenic culture. Is such culture a lost art? The local, accidental colouring of its own age has passed from it; and the greatness that is dead looks greater when every link with what is slight and vulgar has been severed. We can only see it at all in the reflected, refined light which a great education creates for us. Can we bring down that ideal into the gaudy, perplexed light of modern life?

Certainly, for us of the modern world, with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests, distracted by so many sorrows, with many preoccupations, so bewildering an experience, the problem of unity with ourselves, in blitheness and repose, is far harder than it was for the Greek within the simple terms of antique life. Yet, not less than ever, the intellect demands completeness, centrality. It is this which Winckelmann imprints on the imagination of Goethe, at the beginning of life, in its original and simplest form, as in a fragment of Greek art itself, stranded on that littered, indeterminate shore of Germany in the eighteenth century. In Winckelmann, this type comes to him, not as in a book or a theory, but more importunately, because in a passionate life, in a personality. For Goethe, possessing all modern interests, ready to be lost in the perplexed currents of modern thought, he defines, in clearest outline, the eternal problem of culture—balance, unity with one's self, consummate Greek modelling.

It could no longer be solved, as in Phryne ascending naked out of the water, by perfection of bodily form, or any joyful union with the external world; the shadows had grown too long, the light too solemn, for that. It could hardly be solved, as in Pericles or Pheidias, by the direct exercise of any single talent; amid the manifold claims of our

* *Faust*, *Tb. ii. Act. 3.* [W.P.]

modern intellectual life, that could only have ended in a thin, one-sided growth. Goethe's Hellenism was of another order, the *Allgemeinheit* and *Heiterkeit*, the completeness and serenity, of a watchful, exigent intellectualism. *Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren, resolut zu leben*:—is Goethe's description of his own higher life; and what is meant by life in the whole—*im Ganzen*? It means the life of one for whom, over and over again, what was once precious has become indifferent. Every one who aims at the life of culture is met by many forms of it, arising out of the intense, laborious, one-sided development of some special talent. They are the brightest enthusiasms the world has to show: and it is not their part to weigh the claims which this or that alien form of genius makes upon them. But the pure instinct of self-culture cares not so much to reap all that those various forms of genius can give, as to find in them its own strength. The demand of the intellect is to feel itself alive. It must see into the laws, the operation, the intellectual reward of every divided form of culture; but only that it may measure the relation between itself and them. It struggles with those forms till its secret is won from each, and then lets each fall back into its place, in the supreme, artistic view of life. With a kind of passionate coldness, such natures rejoice to be away from and past their former selves, and above all, they are jealous of that abandonment to one special gift which really limits their capabilities. It would have been easy for Goethe, with the gift of a sensuous nature, to let it overgrow him. It comes easily and naturally, perhaps, to certain "other-worldly" natures to be even as the *Schöne Seele*, that ideal of gentle pietism, in *Wilhelm Meister*: but to the large vision of Goethe, this seemed to be a phase of life that a man might feel all round, and leave behind him. Again, it is easy to indulge the commonplace metaphysical instinct. But a taste for metaphysics may be one of those things which we must renounce, if we mean to mould our lives to artistic perfection. Philosophy serves culture, not by the fancied gift of absolute or transcendental knowledge, but by suggesting questions which help one to detect the passion, and strangeness, and dramatic contrasts of life.

But Goethe's culture did not remain "behind the veil": it ever emerged in the practical functions of art, in actual production. For him the problem came to be:—Can the blitheness and universality of the antique ideal be communicated to artistic productions, which shall contain the fulness of the experience of the modern world? We have seen that the development of the various forms of art has corresponded to the development of the thoughts of man concerning humanity, to the growing revelation of the mind to itself. Sculpture corresponds to unperplexed, emphatic outlines of Hellenic humanism; painting to the

mystic depth and intricacy of the middle age; music and poetry have their fortune in the modern world.

Let us understand by poetry all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form, as distinct from its matter. Only in this varied literary form can art command that width, variety, delicacy of resources, which will enable it to deal with the conditions of modern life. What modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to arrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit. And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life? The sense of freedom. That naïve, rough sense of freedom, which supposes man's will to be limited, if at all, only by a will stronger than his, he can never have again. The attempt to represent it in art would have so little verisimilitude that it would be flat and uninteresting. The chief factor in the thoughts of the modern mind concerning itself is the intricacy, the universality of natural law, even in the moral order. For us, necessity is not, as of old, a sort of mythological personage without us, with whom we can do warfare. It is rather a magic web woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network, subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing it in the central forces of the world. Can art represent men and women in these bewildering toils so as to give the spirit at least an equivalent for the sense of freedom? Certainly, in Goethe's romances, and even more in the romances of Victor Hugo, we have high examples of modern art dealing thus with modern life, regarding that life as the modern mind must regard it, yet reflecting upon it blitheness and repose. Natural laws we shall never modify, embarrass us as they may; but there is still something in the nobler or less noble attitude with which we watch their fatal combinations. In those romances of Goethe and Victor Hugo, in some excellent work done *after* them, this entanglement, this network of law, becomes the tragic situation, in which certain groups of noble men and women work out for themselves a supreme *Dénouement*. Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstance which endows one at the end with those great experiences?

DUKE CARL OF ROSENMOLD

ONE stormy season about the beginning of the present century, a great tree came down among certain moss-covered ridges of old masonry which break the surface of the Rosenmold heath, exposing, together with its roots, the remains of two persons. Whether the bodies (male and female, said German bone-science) had been purposely buried there was questionable. They seemed rather to have been hidden away by the accident, whatever it was, which had caused death—crushed, perhaps, under what had been the low wall of a garden—being much distorted, and lying, though neatly enough discovered by the upheaval of the soil, in great confusion. People's attention was the more attracted to the incident because popular fancy had long run upon a tradition of buried treasures, golden treasures, in or about the antiquated ruin which the garden boundary enclosed; the roofless shell of a small but solidly-built stone house, burnt or overthrown, perhaps in the time of the wars at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Many persons went to visit the remains lying out on the dark, wild *plateau*, which stretches away above the tallest roofs of the old grand-ducal town, very distinctly outlined, on that day, in deep fluid grey against a sky still heavy with coming rain. No treasure, indeed, was forthcoming among the masses of fallen stone. But the tradition was so far verified, that the bones had rich golden ornaments about them; and for the minds of some long-remembering people their discovery set at rest an old query. It had never been precisely known what was become of the young Duke Carl, who disappeared from the world just a century before, about the time when a great army passed over those parts, at a political crisis, one result of which was the final absorption of his small territory in a neighbouring dominion. Restless, romantic, eccentric, had he passed on with the victorious host, and taken the chances of an obscure soldier's life? Certain old letters hinted at a different ending—love-letters which provided for a secret meeting, preliminary perhaps to the final departure of the young Duke (who, by the usage of his realm, could only with extreme difficulty go whither, or marry whom, he pleased) to whatever worlds he had chosen, not of his own people. The minds of those still interested in the matter were now at last made up, the disposition of the remains suggesting to them the lively picture of a sullen night, the unexpected passing of the great army, and the two lovers rushing forth wildly

at the sudden tumult outside their cheerful shelter, caught in the dark and trampled out so, surprised and unseen, among the horses and heavy guns.

Time, at the court of the Grand-duke of Rosenmold, at the beginning of the eighteenth century might seem to have been standing still almost since the Middle Age—since the days of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, at which period, by the marriage of the hereditary Grand-duke with a princess of the Imperial house, a sudden tide of wealth, flowing through the grand-ducal exchequer, had left a kind of golden architectural splendour on the place, always too ample for its population. The sloping Gothic roofs for carrying off the heavy snows still indented the sky—a world of tiles, with space uncurtailed for the awkward gambols of that very German goblin, Hans Klapper, on the long, slumberous, northern nights. Whole quarryfuls of wrought stone had been piled along the streets and around the squares, and were now grown, in truth, like nature's self again, in their rough, time-worn massiveness. with weeds and wild flowers where their decay accumulated, blossoming, always the same, beyond people's memories, every summer as the storks came back to their platforms on the remote chimney-tops. Without, all was as it had been on the eve of the Thirty Years' War: the venerable dark-green mouldiness, priceless pearl of architectural effect, was unbroken by a single new gable. And within, human life,—its thoughts, its habits, above all, its etiquette—had been put out by no matter of excitement, political or intellectual, ever at all, one might say, at any time. The rambling grand-ducal palace was full to overflowing with furniture, which, useful or useless, was all ornamental, and none of it new, Suppose the various objects, especially the contents of the haunted old lumber-rooms, duly arranged and ticketed, and their Highnesses would have had a historic museum, after which those famed "Green Vaults" at Dresden would hardly have counted as one of the glories of Augustus the Strong. An immense heraldry, that truly German vanity, had grown, expatiating, florid, eloquent, over everything, without and within—windows, house-fronts, church walls, and church floors. And one-half of the male inhabitants were big or little State functionaries, mostly of a *quasi* decorative order—the treble-singer to the town-council, the court organist, the court poet, and the like—each with his deputies and assistants, maintaining, all unbroken, a sleepy ceremonial, to make the hours just noticeable as they slipped away. At court, with a continuous round of ceremonies, which, though early in the day, must always take place under a jealous exclusion of the sun, one seemed to live in perpetual candlelight.

It was in a delightful rummaging of one of those lumber-rooms,

escaped from that candle-light into the broad day of the uppermost windows, that the young Duke Carl laid his hand on an old volume of the year 1486, printed in heavy type, with frontispiece, perhaps, by Albert Dürer—*Ars Versificandi: The Art of Versification*: by Conrad Celtes. Crowned poet of the Emperor Frederick the Third, he had the right to speak on that subject; for while he vindicated as best he might old German literature against the charge of barbarism, he did also a man's part towards reviving in the Fatherland the knowledge of the poetry of Greece and Rome; and for Carl, the pearl, the golden nugget, of the volume was the Sapphic ode with which it closed—*To Apollo, praying that he would come to us from Italy, bringing his lyre with him: Ad Apollinem, ut ab Italis cum lyra ad Germanos veniat*. The god of light, coming to Germany from some more favoured world beyond it, over leagues of rainy hill and mountain, making soft day there: that had ever been the dream of the ghost-ridden yet deep-feeling and certainly meek German soul; of the great Dürer, for instance, who had been the friend of this Conrad Celtes, and himself, all German as he was, like a gleam of real day amid that hyperborean German darkness—a darkness which clave to him, too, at that dim time, when there were violent robbers, nay, real live devils, in every German wood. And it was precisely the aspiration of Carl himself. Those verses, coming to the boy's hand at the right moment, brought a beam of effectual daylight to a whole magazine of observation, fancy, desire, stored up from the first impressions of childhood. To bring Apollo with his lyre to Germany! It was precisely what he, Carl, desired to do—was, as he might flatter himself, actually doing.

The daylight, the Apolline aurora, which the young Duke Carl claimed to be bringing to his candle-lit people, came in the somewhat questionable form of the contemporary French ideal, in matters of art and literature—French plays, French architecture, French looking-glasses—Apollo in the dandified costume of Lewis the Fourteenth. Only, confronting the essentially aged and decrepit graces of his model with his own essentially youthful temper, he invigorated what he borrowed; and with him an aspiration towards the classical ideal, so often hollow and insincere, lost all its affectation. His doating grandfather, the reigning Grand-duke, afforded readily enough, from the great store of inherited wealth which would one day be the lad's, the funds necessary for the completion of the vast unfinished Residence, with "pavilions" (after the manner of the famous Mansard) uniting its scattered parts while a wonderful flowerage of architectural fancy, with broken attic roofs, passed over and beyond the earlier fabric; the later and lighter forms being in part carved adroitly out of the heavy masses of the old, honest, "stump-Gothic" tracery. One fault only Carl found

in his French models, and was resolute to correct. He would have, at least within, real marble in place of stucco, and, if he might, perhaps solid gold for gilding. There was something in the sanguine, floridly handsome youth, with his alertness of mind turned wholly, amid the vexing preoccupations of an age of war, upon embellishment and the softer things of life which soothed the testy humours of the old Duke, like the quiet physical warmth of a fire or the sun. He was ready to preside with all ceremony at a presentation of Marivaux's *Death of Hannibal*, played in the original, with such imperfect mastery of the French accent as the lovers of new light in Rosenmold had at command, in a theatre copied from that at Versailles, lined with pale yellow satin, and with a picture, amid the stucco braveries of the ceiling, of the Septentrional Apollo himself, in somewhat watery red and blue. Innumerable wax lights in cut-glass lustres were a thing of course. Duke Carl himself, attired after the newest French fashion, played the part of Hannibal. The old Duke, indeed, at a council-board devoted hitherto to matters of state, would nod very early in certain long discussions on matters of art—magnificent schemes, from this or that eminent contractor, for spending his money tastefully, distinguishings of the *rococo* and the *baroque*. On the other hand, having been all his life in close intercourse with select humanity, self-conscious and arrayed for presentation, he was a helpful judge of portraits and the varicus degrees of the attainment of truth therein—a phase of fine art which the grandson could not value too much. The sergeant-painter and the deputy sergeant-painter were, indeed, conventional performers enough; as mechanical in their dispensation of wigs, finger-rings, ruffles, and simpers, as the figure of the armed knight who struck the bell in the Residence tower. But scattered through its half-deserted rooms, state bed-chambers and the like, hung the works of more genuine masters, still as unadulterate as the hock, known to be two generations old, in the grand-ducal cellar. The youth had even his scheme of inviting the illustrious Antony Coppel to the court; to live there, if he would, with the honours and emoluments of a prince of the blood. The illustrious Mansard had actually promised to come, had not his sudden death taken him away from earthly glory.

And at least, if one must forgo the masters, masterpieces might be had for their price. For ten thousand marks—day ever to be remembered!—a genuine work of “the Urbinatè”, from the cabinet of a certain commercially-minded Italian grand-duke, was on its way to Rosenmold, anxiously awaited as it came over rainy mountain-passes, and along the rough German roads, through doubtful weather. The tribune, the throne itself, were made ready in the presence-chamber, with hangings in the grand-ducal colours, laced with gold, together

with a speech and an ode. Late at night, at last, the waggon was heard rumbling into the courtyard, with the guest arrived in safety, but, if one must confess one's self, perhaps forbidding at first sight. From a comfortless portico, with all the grotesqueness of the Middle Age, supported by brown, aged bishops, whose meditations no incident could distract, Our Lady looked out no better than an unpretending nun, with nothing to say the like of which one was used to hear. Certainly one was not stimulated by, enwrapped, absorbed in the great master's doings; only, with much private disappointment, put on one's mettle to defend him against critics notoriously wanting in sensibility, and against one's self. In truth, the painter whom Carl most unaffectedly enjoyed, the real vigour of his youthful and somewhat animal taste finding here its proper sustenance, was Rubens—Rubens reached, as he is reached at his best, in well-preserved family portraits, fresh, gay, ingenious, as of privileged young people who could never grow old. Had not he, too, brought something of the splendour of a "better land" into those northern regions; if not the glowing gold of Titian's Italian sun, yet the carnation and yellow of roses or tulips, such as might really grow there with cultivation, even under rainy skies? And then, about this time something was heard at the grand-ducal court of certain mysterious experiments in the making of porcelain; veritable alchemy, for the turning of clay into gold. The reign of Dresden china was at hand, with one's own world of little men and women more delightfully diminutive still, amid imitations of artificial flowers. The young Duke braced himself for a plot to steal the gifted Herr Böttcher from his enforced residence, as if in prison, at the fortress of Meissen. Why not bring pots and wheels to Rosenmold, and prosecute his discoveries there? The Grand-duke, indeed, preferred his old service of gold plate, and would have had the lad a *virtuoso* in nothing less costly than gold—gold snuff-boxes.

For, in truth, regarding what belongs to art or culture, as elsewhere, we may have a large appetite and little to feed on. Only in the things of the mind, the appetite itself counts for so much, at least in hopeful, unobstructed youth, with the world before it. "You are the Apollo you tell us of, the northern Apollo," people were beginning to say to him, surprised from time to time by a mental purpose beyond their guesses—expressions, liftings, softly gleaming or vehement lights, in the handsome countenance of the youth, and his effective speech, as he roamed, inviting all about him to share the honey, from music to painting, from painting to the drama, all alike florid in style, yes! and perhaps third-rate. And so far consistently throughout he had held that the centre of one's intellectual system must be understood to be in France. He had

thoughts of proceeding to that country, secretly, in person, there to attain the very impress of its genius.

Meantime, its more portable flowers came to order in abundance. That the roses, so to put it, were but excellent artificial flowers, redolent only of musk, neither disproved for Carl the validity of his ideal nor for our minds the vocation of Carl himself in these matters. In art, as in all other things of the mind, again, much depends on the receiver; and the higher informing capacity, if it exist within, will mould an unpromising matter to itself, will realise itself by selection, and the preference of the better in what is bad or indifferent, asserting its prerogative under the most unlikely conditions. People had in Carl, could they have understood it, the spectacle, under those superficial braveries, of a really heroic effort of mind at a disadvantage. That *rococo* seventeenth-century French imitation of the true Renaissance, called out in Carl a boundless enthusiasm, as the Italian original had done two centuries before. He put into his reception of the æsthetic achievements of Lewis the Fourteenth what young France had felt when Francis the First brought home the great Da Vinci and his works. It was but himself truly, after all, that he had found, so fresh and real, among those artificial roses.

He was thrown the more upon such outward and sensuous products of mind—architecture, pottery, presently on music—because for him, with so large intellectual capacity, there was, to speak properly, no literature in his mother-tongue. Books there were, German books, but of a dulness, a distance from the actual interests of the warm, various, coloured life around and within him, to us hardly conceivable. There was more entertainment in the natural train of his own solitary thoughts, humoured and rightly attuned by pleasant visible objects, than in all the books he had hunted through so carefully for that all-searching intellectual light, of which a passing gleam of interest gave fallacious promise here or there. And still, generously, he held to the belief, urging him to fresh endeavour, that the literature which might set heart and mind free must exist somewhere, though court librarians could not say where. In search for it he spent many days in those old book-closets where he had lighted on the Latin ode of Conrad Celtes. Was German literature always to remain no more than a kind of penal apparatus for the teasing of the brain? Oh! for a literature set free, conterminous with the interests of life itself.

In music, it might be thought, Germany had already vindicated its spiritual liberty. One and another of those North-german towns were already aware of the youthful Sebastian Bach. The first notes had been heard of a music not borrowed from France, but flowing, as naturally as springs from their sources, out of the ever musical soul

of Germany itself. And the Duke Carl was a sincere lover of music, himself playing melodiously on the violin to a delighted court. That new Germany of the spirit would be builded, perhaps, to the sound of music. In those other artistic enthusiasms, as the prophet of the French drama or the architectural taste of Lewis the Fourteenth, he had contributed himself generously, helping out with his own good-faith the inadequacy of their appeal. Music alone hitherto had really helped *him*, and taken him out of himself. To music, instinctively, more and more he was dedicate; and in his desire to refine and organise the court music, from which, by leave of absence to official performers enjoying their salaries at a distance, many parts had literally fallen away, like the favourite notes of a worn-out spinet, he was ably seconded by a devoted youth, the deputy organist of the grand-ducal chapel. A member of the Roman Church amid a people chiefly of the Reformed religion, Duke Carl would creep sometimes into the curtained court pew of the Lutheran Church, to which he had presented its massive golden crucifix, to listen to the *chorales*, the execution of which he had managed to time to his liking, relishing, he could hardly explain why, those passages of a pleasantly monotonous and, as it might seem, unending melody—which certainly never came to what could rightly be called an ending here on earth; and having also a sympathy with the cheerful genius of Dr. Martin Luther, with his good tunes, and that ringing laughter which sent dull goblins flitting.

At this time, then, his mind ran eagerly for awhile on the project of some musical and dramatic development of a fancy suggested by that old Latin poem of Conrad Celtes—the hyperborean Apollo, sojourning, in the revolutions of time, in the sluggish north for a season, yet Apollo still, prompting art, music, poetry, and the philosophy which interprets man's life, making a sort of intercalary day amid the natural darkness; not meridian day, of course, but a soft derivative daylight, good enough for us. It would be necessarily a mystic piece, abounding in fine touches, suggestions, innuendoes. His vague proposal was met half-way by the very practical executant power of his friend or servant, the deputy organist, already pondering, with just a satiric flavour (suppressible in actual performance, if the time for that should ever come) a musical work on Duke Carl himself; *Balder, an Interlude*. He was contented to re-cast and enlarge the part of the northern god of light, with a now wholly serious intention. But still, the near, the real and familiar, gave precision to, or actually superseded, the distant and the ideal. The soul of the music was but a transfusion from the fantastic but so interesting creature close at hand. And Carl was certainly true to his proposed part in that he gladdened others by an intellectual radiance which had ceased to mean

warmth or animation for himself. For him the light was still to seek in France, in Italy, above all in old Greece, amid the previous things which might yet be lurking there unknown, in art, in poetry, perhaps in very life, till Prince Fortunate should come.

Yes! it was thither, to Greece, that his thoughts were turned during those romantic classical musings while the opera was made ready. That, in due time, was presented, with sufficient success. Meantime, his purpose was grown definite to visit that original country of the Muses, from which the pleasant things of Italy had been but derivative; to brave the difficulties in the way of leaving home at all, the difficulties also of access to Greece, in the present condition of the country.

At times the fancy came that he must really belong by descent to a southern race, that a physical cause might lie beneath this strange restlessness, like the imperfect reminiscence of something that had passed in earlier life. The aged ministers of heraldry were set to work (actually prolonging their days by an unexpected revival of interest in their too well-worn function) at the search for some obscure rivulet of Greek descent—later Byzantine Greek, perhaps,—in the Rosenmold genealogy. No! with a hundred quarterings, they were as indigenous, incorruptible heraldry re-asserted, as the old yew-trees asquat on the heath.

And meantime those dreams of remote and probably adventurous travel lent the youth, still so healthy of body, a wing for more distant expeditions than he had ever yet inclined to, among his own wholesome German woodlands. In long rambles, afoot or on horseback, by day and night, he flung himself, for the resettling of his sanity, on the cheerful influences of their simple imagery; the hawks, as if asleep on the air below him; the bleached crags, evoked by late sunset among the dark oaks; the water-wheels, with their pleasant murmur, in the foldings of the hillside.

Clouds came across his heaven, little sudden clouds, like those which in this northern latitude, where summer is at best but a flighty visitor, chill out the heart, though but for a few minutes at a time, of the warmest afternoon. He had fits of the gloom of other people—their dull passage through and exit from the world, the threadbare incidents of their lives, their dismal funerals—which, unless he drove them away immediately by strenuous exercise, settled into a gloom more properly his own. Yet at such times outward things also would seem to concur unkindly in deepening the mental shadow about him, almost as if there were indeed animation in the natural world, elfin spirits in those inaccessible hillsides and dark ravines, as old German poetry pretended, cheerfully assistant sometimes, but for the most part troublesome, to their human kindred. Of late these fits had

come somewhat more frequently, and had continued. Often it was a weary, deflowered face that his favourite mirrors reflected. Yes! people were prosaic, and their lives threadbare:—all but himself and organist Max, perhaps, and Fritz the treble-singer. In return, the people in actual contact with him thought him a little mad, though still ready to flatter his madness, as he could detect. Alone with the doating old grandfather in their stiff, distant, alien world of etiquette, he felt surrounded by flatterers, and would fain have tested the sincerity even of Max, and Fritz who said, echoing the words of the other, “Yourself, Sire, are the Apollo of Germany!”

It was his desire to test the sincerity of the people about him, and unveil flatterers, which in the first instance suggested a trick he played upon the court, upon all Europe. In that complex but wholly Teutonic genealogy lately under research, lay a much-prized thread of descent from the fifth Emperor Charles, and Carl, under direction, read with much readiness to be impressed all that was attainable concerning the great ancestor, finding there in truth little enough to reward his pains. One hint he took, however. He determined to assist at his own obsequies.

That he might in this way facilitate that much-desired journey occurred to him almost at once as an accessory motive, and in a little while definite motives were engrossed in the dramatic interest, the pleasing gloom, the curiosity, of the thing itself. Certainly, amid the living world in Germany, especially in old, sleepy Rosenmold, death made great parade of itself. Youth even, in its sentimental mood, was ready to indulge in the luxury of decay, and amuse itself with fancies of the tomb; as in periods of decadence or suspended progress, when the world seems to nap for a time, artifices for the arrest or disguise of old age are adopted as a fashion, and become the fopperies of the young. The whole body of Carl’s relations, saving the drowsy old grandfather, already lay buried beneath their expensive heraldries: at times the whole world almost seemed buried thus—made and re-made of the dead—its entire fabric of politics, of art, of custom, being essentially heraldic “achievements”, dead men’s mementoes such as those. You see he was a sceptical young man, and his kinsmen dead and gone had passed certainly, in his imaginations of them, into no other world, save, perhaps, into some stiffer, slower, sleepier, and more pompous phase of ceremony—the last degree of court etiquette—as they lay there in the great, low-pitched, grand-ducal vault, in their coffins, dusted once a year for All Souls’ Day, when the court officials descended thither, and Mass for the dead was sung, amid an array of dropping crape and cobwebs. The lad, with his full red lips and open blue eyes, coming as with a great cup in his hands to life’s feast,

revolted from the like of that, as from suffocation. And still the suggestion of it was everywhere. In the garish afternoon, up to the wholesome heights of the Heiligenberg suddenly from one of the villages of the plain came the grinding death-knell. It seemed to come out of the ugly grave itself, and enjoyment was dead. On his way homeward sadly, an hour later, he enters by chance the open door of a village church, half buried in the tangle of its churchyard. The rude coffin is lying there of a labourer who had but a hovel to live in. The enemy dogged one's footsteps! The young Carl seemed to be flying, not from death simply, but from assassination.

And as these thoughts sent him back in the rebounding power of youth, with renewed appetite, to life and sense, so, grown at last familiar, they gave additional purpose to his fantastic experiment. Had it not been said by a wise man that after all the offence of death was in its trappings? Well! he would, as far as might be, try the thing, while, presumably, a large reversionary interest in life was still his. He would purchase his freedom, at least of those gloomy "trappings", and listen while he was spoken of as dead. The mere preparations gave pleasant proof of the devotion to him of a certain number, who entered without question into his plans. It is not difficult to mislead the world concerning what happens to those who live at the artificial distance from it of a court, with its high wall of etiquette. However the matter was managed, no one doubted, when, with a blazon of ceremonious words, the court news went forth that, after a brief illness, according to the way of his race, the hereditary Grand-duke was deceased. In momentary regret, bethinking them of the lad's taste for splendour, those to whom the arrangement of such matters belonged (the grandfather now sinking deeper into bare quiescence) backed by the popular wish, determined to give him a funeral with even more than grand-ducal measure of lugubrious magnificence. The place of his repose was marked out for him as officiously as if it had been the delimitation of a kingdom, in the ducal burial vault, through the cobwebbed windows of which, from the garden where he played as a child, the young Duke had often peered at the faded glories of the immense coroneted coffins, the oldest shedding their velvet tatters around them. Surrounded by the whole official world of Rosenmold, arrayed for the occasion in almost forgotten dresses of ceremony as if for a masquerade, the new coffin glided from the fragrant chapel where the *Requiem* was sung, down the broad staircase lined with peach-colour and yellow marble, into the shadows below. Carl himself, disguised as a strolling musician, had followed it across the square through a drenching rain, on which circumstance he overheard the old people congratulate the "blessed" dead within, had listened to a

dirge of his own composing brought out on the great organ with much *bravura* by his friend, the new court organist, who was in the secret, and that night turned the key of the garden entrance to the vault, and peeped in upon the sleepy, painted, and bewigged young pages whose duty it would be for a certain number of days to come to watch beside their late master's couch.

And a certain number of weeks afterwards it was known that "the mad Duke" had reappeared, to the dismay of court marshals. Things might have gone hard with the youth had the strange news, at first as fantastic rumour, then as matter of solemn enquiry, lastly as ascertained fact, pleasing or otherwise, been less welcome than it was to the grandfather, too old, indeed, to sorrow deeply, but grown so decrepit as to propose that ministers should possess themselves of the person of the young Duke, proclaim him of age and regent. From those dim travels, presenting themselves to the old man, who had never been fifty miles away from home, as almost lunar in their audacity, he would come back—come back "in time", he murmured faintly, eager to feel that youthful, animating life on the stir about him once more.

Carl himself, now the thing was over, greatly relishing its satiric elements, must be forgiven the trick of the burial and his still greater enormity in coming to life again. And then, duke or no duke, it was understood that he willed that things should in no case be precisely as they had been. He would never again be quite so near people's lives as in the past—a fitful, intermittent visitor—almost as if he had been properly dead; the empty coffin remaining as a kind of symbolical "coronation incident", setting forth his future relations to his subjects. Of all those who believed him dead one human creature only, save the grandfather, had sincerely sorrowed for him; a woman, in tears as the funeral train passed by, with whom he had sympathetically discussed his own merits. Till then he had forgotten the incident which had exhibited him to her as the very genius of goodness and strength; how, one day, driving with her country produce into the market, and, embarrassed by the crowd, she had broken one of a hundred little police rules, whereupon the officers were about to carry her away to be fined, or worse, amid the jeers of the bystanders, always ready to deal hardly with "the gipsy", at which precise moment the tall Duke Carl, like the flash of a trusty sword, had leapt from the palace stair and caused her to pass on in peace. She had half detected him through his disguise; in due time news of his reappearance had been ceremoniously carried to her in her little cottage, and the remembrance of her hung about him not ungratefully, as he went with delight upon his way.

The first long stage of his journey over, in headlong flight night and day, he found himself one summer morning under the heat of what seemed a southern sun, at last really at large on the Bergstrasse, with the rich plain of the Palatinate on his left hand; on the right hand vineyards, seen now for the first time, sloping up into the crisp beeches of the Odenwald. By Weinheim only an empty tower remained of the Castle of Windeck. He lay for the night in the great whitewashed guest-chamber of the Capuchin convent.

The national rivers, like the national woods, have a family likeness: the Main, the Lahn, the Moselle, the Neckar, the Rhine. By help of such accommodation as chance afforded, partly on the stream itself, partly along the banks, he pursued the leisurely winding course of one of the prettiest of these, tarrying for awhile in the towns, grey, white, or red, which came in his way, tasting their delightful native "little" wines, peeping into their old overloaded churches, inspecting the church furniture, or trying the organs. For three nights he slept warm and dry, on the hay stored in a deserted cloister, and, attracted into the neighbouring minster for a snatch of church music, narrowly escaped detection. By miraculous chance the grimmest lord of Rosenmold was there within, recognised the youth and his companions—visitors naturally conspicuous, amid the crowd of peasants around them—and for some hours was upon their traces. After unclean town streets the country air was a perfume by contrast, or actually scented with pinewoods. One seemed to breathe with it fancies of the woods, the hills, and water—of a sort of souls in the landscape, but cheerful and genial now, happy souls! A distant group of pines on the verge of a great upland awoke a violent desire to be there—seemed to challenge one to proceed thither. Was their infinite view thence? It was like an outpost of some far-off fancy land, a pledge of the reality of such. Above Cassel, the airy hills curved in one black outline against a glowing sky, pregnant, one could fancy, with weird forms, which might be at their old *diableries* again on those remote places ere night was quite come there. At last in the streets, the hundred churches, of Cologne, he feels something of a "Gothic" enthusiasm, and all a German's enthusiasm for the Rhine.

Through the length and breadth of the Rhine country the vintage was begun. The red ruins on the heights, the white-walled villages, white Saint Nepomuc upon the bridges, were but isolated high notes of contrast in a landscape, sleepy and indistinct under the flood of sunshine, with a headiness in it like that of must, of the new wine. The noise of the vineyards came through the lovely haze, still, at times, with the sharp sound of a bell—death-bell, perhaps, or only a crazy summons to the vintagers. And amid those broad, willowy reaches

of the Rhine at length, from Bingen to Mannheim, where the brown hills wander into airy, blue distance, like a little picture of paradise, he felt that France was at hand. Before him lay the road thither, easy and straight.—That well of light so close! But, unexpectedly, the capricious incidence of his own humour with the opportunity did not suggest, as he would have wagered it must, “Go, drink at once!” Was it that France had come to be of no account at all, in comparison of Italy, of Greece? or that, as he passed over the German land, the conviction had come, “For you, France, Italy, Hellas, is here!”—that some recognition of the untried spiritual possibilities of meek Germany had for Carl transferred the ideal land out of space beyond the Alps or the Rhine, into future time, whither he must be the leader? A little chilly of humour, in spite of his manly strength, he was journeying partly in search of physical heat. To-day certainly, in this great vineyard, physical heat was about him in measure sufficient, at least for a German constitution. Might it be not otherwise with the imaginative, the intellectual, heat and light; the real need being that of an interpreter—Apollo, illuminant rather as the revealer than as the bringer of light? With large belief that the *Éclaircissement*, the *Aufklärung* (he had already found the name for the thing) would indeed come, he had been in much bewilderment whence and how. Here, he began to see that it could be in no other way than by action of informing thought upon the vast accumulated material of which Germany was in possession: art, poetry, fiction, an entire imaginative world, following reasonably upon a deeper understanding of the past, of nature, of one’s self—an understanding of all beside through the knowledge of one’s self. To understand, would be the indispensable first step towards the enlargement of the great past, of one’s little present, by criticism, by imagination. Then, the imprisoned souls of nature would speak as of old. The Middle Age, in Germany, where the past has had such generous reprisals, never far from us, would reassert its mystic spell, for the better understanding of our Raffaele. The spirits of distant Hellas would reawake in the men and women of little German towns. Distant times, the most alien thoughts, would come near together, as elements in a great historic symphony. A kind of ardent, new patriotism awoke in him, sensitive for the first time at the words *national* poesy, *national* art and literature, *German* philosophy. To the resources of the past, of himself, of what was possible for German mind, more and more his mind opens as he goes on his way. A free, open space had been determined, which something now to be created, created by him, must occupy. “Only,” he thought, “if I had coadjutors! If these thoughts would awake in but one other mind!”

At Strasbourg, with its mountainous goblin houses, nine stories

high, grouped snugly, in the midst of that inclement plain, like a great stork's nest around the romantic red steeple of its cathedral, Duke Carl became fairly captive to the Middle Ages. Tarrying there week after week he worked hard, but (without a ray of light from others) in one long mistake, at the chronology and history of the coloured windows. Antiquity's very self seemed expressed there, on the visionary images of king or patriarch, in the deeply incised marks of character, the hoary hair, the massive proportions, telling of a length of years beyond what is lived now. Surely, past ages, could one get at the historic soul of them, were not dead but living, rich in company, for the entertainment, the expansion, of the present: and Duke Carl was still without suspicion of the cynic afterthought that such historic soul was but an arbitrary substitution, a generous loan of one's self.

The mystic soul of Nature laid hold on him next, saying, "Come! understand, interpret me!" He was awakened one morning by the jingle of sledge-bells along the street beneath his windows. Winter had descended betimes from the mountains: the pale Rhine below the bridge of boats on the long way to Kehl was swollen with ice, and for the first time he realised that Switzerland was at hand. On a sudden he was captive to the enthusiasm of the mountains, and hastened along the valley of the Rhine by Alt Breisach and Basle, unrepelled by a thousand difficulties, to Swiss farmhouses and lonely villages, seldom still, and untouched by strangers. At Grindelwald, sleeping at last in the close neighbourhood of the greater Alps, he had the sense of an overbrooding presence, of some strange new companions around him. Here one might yield one's self to the unalterable imaginative appeal of the elements in their highest force and simplicity—light, air, water, earth. On very early spring days a mantle was suddenly lifted; the Alps were an apex of natural glory, towards which, in broadening spaces of light, the whole of Europe sloped upwards. Through them, on the right hand, as he journeyed on, were the doorways to Italy, to Como or Venice, from yonder peak Italy's self was visible!—as, on the left hand, in the South-german towns, in a high-toned, artistic fineness, in the dainty, flowered ironwork for instance, the overflow of Italian genius was traceable. These things presented themselves at last only to remind him that, in a new intellectual hope, he was already on his way home. Straight through life, straight through nature and man, with one's own self-knowledge as a light thereon, not by way of the geographical Italy or Greece, lay the road to the new Hellas, to be realised now as the outcome of home-born German genius. At times, in that early fine weather, looking now not southwards, but towards Germany, he seemed to trace the outspread of a faint, not wholly natural, aurora over the

dark northern country. And it was in an actual sunrise that the news came which finally put him on the directest road homewards. One hardly dared breathe in the rapid uprise of all-embracing light which seemed like the intellectual rising of the Fatherland, when up the straggling path to his high beech-grown summit (was one safe nowhere?) protesting over the roughness of the way, came the too familiar voices (*ennui* itself made audible) of certain high functionaries of Rosenmold, come to claim their new sovereign, close upon the runaway.

Bringing news of the old Duke's decease! With a real grief at his heart, he hastened now over the ground which lay between him and the bed of death, still trying, at quieter intervals, to snatch profit by the way; peeping, at the most unlikely hours, on the objects of his curiosity, waiting for a glimpse of dawn through glowing church windows, penetrating into old church treasures by candle-light, taxing the old courtiers to pant up, for "the view", to this or that conspicuous point in the world of hilly woodland. From one such at last, in spite of everything with pleasure to Carl, old Rosenmold was visible—the attic windows of the Residence, the storks on the chimneys, the green copper roofs baking in the long, dry German summer. The homeliness of true old Germany! He too felt it, and yearned towards his home.

And the "beggar-maid" was there. Thoughts of her had haunted his mind all the journey through, as he was aware, not unpleased, graciously overflowing towards any creature he found dependent upon him. The mere fact that she was awaiting him, at his disposition, meekly, and as though through his long absence she had never quitted the spot on which he had said farewell, touched his fancy, and on a sudden concentrated his wavering preference into a practical decision. "King Cophetua" would be hers. And his goodwill sunned her wild-grown beauty into majesty, into a kind of queenly richness. There was natural majesty in the heavy waves of golden hair folded closely above the neck, built a little massively; and she looked kind, beseeching also, capable of sorrow. She was like clear sunny weather, with bluebells and the green leaves, between rainy days, and seemed to embody *Die Ruh auf dem Gipfel*—all the restful hours he had spent of late in the wood-sides and on the hilltops. One June day, on which she seemed to have withdrawn into herself all the tokens of summer, brought decision to our lover of artificial roses, who had cared so little hitherto for the like of her. Grand-duke perforce, he would make her his wife, and had already re-assured her with lively mockery of his horrified ministers. "Go straight to life!" said his new poetic code; and here was the opportunity;—here, also, the real "adventure",

in comparison of which his previous efforts that way seemed childish theatricalities, fit only to cheat a little the profound *ennui* of actual life. In a hundred stolen interviews she taught the hitherto indifferent youth the art of love.

Duke Carl had effected arrangements for his marriage, secret, but complete and soon to be made public. Long since he had cast complacent eyes on a strange architectural relic, an old grange or hunting-lodge on the heath, with he could hardly have defined what charm of remoteness and old romance. Popular belief amused itself with reports of the wizard who inhabited or haunted the place, his fantastic treasures, his immense age. His windows might be seen glittering afar on stormy nights, with a blaze of golden ornaments, said the more adventurous loiterer. It was not because he was suspicious still, but in a kind of wantonness of affection, and as if by way of giving yet greater zest to the luxury of their mutual trust that Duke Carl added to his announcement of the purposed place and time of the event a pretended test of the girl's devotion. He tells her the story of the aged wizard, meagre and wan, to whom she must find her way alone for the purpose of asking a question all-important to himself. The fierce old man will try to escape with terrible threats, will turn, or half turn, into repulsive animals. She must cling the faster; at last the spell will be broken; he will yield, he will become a youth once more, and give the desired answer.

The girl, otherwise so self-denying, and still modestly anxious for a private union, not to shame his high position in the world, had wished for one thing at least—to be loved amid the splendours habitual to him. Duke Carl sends to the old lodge his choicest personal possessions. For many days the public is aware of something on hand; a few get delightful glimpses of the treasures on their way to "the place on the heath". Was he preparing against contingencies, should the great army, soon to pass through these parts, not leave the country as innocently as might be desired?

The short grey day seemed a long one to those who, for various reasons, were waiting anxiously for the darkness; the court people fretful and on their mettle, the townsfolk suspicious, Duke Carl full of amorous longing. At her distant cottage beyond the hills, Gretchen kept herself ready for the trial. It was expected that certain great military officers would arrive that night, commanders of a victorious host making its way across Northern Germany, with no great respect for the rights of neutral territory, often dealing with life and property too rudely to find the coveted treasure. It was but one episode in a cruel war. Duke Carl did not wait for the grandly illuminated supper prepared for their reception. Events precipitated themselves. Those

officers came as practically victorious occupants, sheltering themselves for the night in the luxurious rooms of the great palace. The army was in fact in motion close behind its leaders, who (Gretchen warm and happy in the arms, not of the aged wizard, but of the youthful lover) are discussing terms for the final absorption of the duchy with those traitorous old councillors. At their delicate supper Duke Carl amuses his companion with caricature, amid cries of cheerful laughter, of the sleepy courtiers entertaining their martial guests in all their pedantic politeness, like people in some farcical dream. A priest, and certain chosen friends to witness the marriage, were to come ere night-fall to the grange. The lovers heard, as they thought, the sound of distant thunder. The hours passed as they waited, and what came at last was not the priest with his companions. Could they have been detained by the storm? Duke Carl gently re-assures the girl—bids her believe in him, and wait. But through the wind, grown to tempest, beyond the sound of the violent thunder—louder than any possible thunder—nearer and nearer comes the storm of the victorious army, like some disturbance of the earth itself, as they flee into the tumult, out of the intolerable confinement and suspense, dead-set upon them.

The *Enlightening*, the *Aufklärung*, according to the aspiration of Duke Carl, was effected by other hands; Lessing and Herder, brilliant precursors of the age of genius which centred in Goethe, coming well within the natural limits of Carl's lifetime. As precursors Goethe gratefully recognised them, and understood that there had been a thousand others, looking forward to a new era in German literature with the desire which is in some sort a "forecast of capacity", awakening each other to the permanent reality of a poetic ideal in human life, slowly forming that public consciousness to which Goethe actually addressed himself. It is their aspirations I have tried to embody in the portrait of Carl.

"A hard winter had covered the Main with a firm footing of ice. The liveliest social intercourse was quickened thereon. I was unfailing from early morning onwards; and, being lightly clad, found myself, when my mother drove up later to look on, fairly frozen. My mother sat in the carriage, quite stately in her furred cloak of red velvet, fastened on the breast with thick gold cord and tassels.

"'Dear mother,' I said, on the spur of the moment, 'give me your furs, I am frozen.'

"She was equally ready. In a moment I had on the cloak. Falling below the knee, with its rich trimming of sables, and enriched with

gold, it became me excellently. So clad I made my way up and down with a cheerful heart."

That was Goethe, perhaps fifty years later. His mother also related the incident to Bettina Brentano:—"There, skated my son, like an arrow among the groups. Away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. Anything so beautiful is not to be seen now. I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him as he darted out from one arch of the bridge, and in again under the other, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew." In that amiable figure I seem to see the fulfilment of the *Resurgam* on Carl's empty coffin—the aspiring soul of Carl himself, in freedom and effective, at last.

LOW COUNTRIES

SEBASTIAN VAN STORCK

SEBASTIAN VAN STORCK

It was a winter-scene, by Adrian van de Velde, or by Isaac van Ostade. All the delicate poetry together with all the delicate comfort of the frosty season was in the leafless branches turned to silver, the furred dresses of the skaters, the warmth of the red-brick house-fronts under the gauze of white fog, the gleams of pale sunlight on the cuirasses of the mounted soldiers as they receded into the distance. Sebastian van Storck, confessedly the most graceful performer in all that skating multitude, moving in endless maze over the vast surface of the frozen water-meadow, liked best this season of the year for its expression of a perfect impassivity, or at least of a perfect repose. The earth was, or seemed to be, at rest, with a breathlessness of slumber which suited the young man's peculiar temper. The heavy summer, as it dried up the meadows now lying dead below the ice, set free a crowded and competing world of life, which, while it gleamed very pleasantly russet and yellow for the painter Albert Cuyp, seemed wellnigh to suffocate Sebastian van Storck. Yet with all his appreciation of the national winter, Sebastian was not altogether a Hollander. His mother, of Spanish descent and Catholic, had given a richness of tone and form to the healthy freshness of the Dutch physiognomy, apt to preserve its youthfulness of aspect far beyond the period of life usual with other peoples. This mixed expression charmed the eye of Isaac van Ostade, who had painted his portrait from a sketch taken at one of those skating parties, with his plume of squirrel's tail and fur muff, in all the modest pleasantness of boyhood. When he returned home lately from his studies at a place far inland, at the proposal of his tutor, to recover, as the tutor suggested, a certain loss of robustness, something more than that cheerful indifference of early youth had passed away. The learned man, who held, as was alleged, the doctrines of a surprising new philosophy, reluctant to disturb too early the fine intelligence of the pupil entrusted to him, had found it, perhaps, a matter of honesty to send back to his parents one likely enough to catch from others any sort of theoretic light; for the latter he wrote dwelt much on the lad's intellectual fearlessness. "At present," he had written, "he is influenced more by curiosity than by a care for truth, according to the character of the young. Certainly, he differs strikingly from his equals in age, by his passion for a vigorous intel-

lectual gymnastic, such as the supine character of their minds renders distasteful to most young men, but in which he shows a fearlessness that at times makes me fancy that his ultimate destination may be the military life; for indeed the rigidly logical tendency of his mind always leads him out upon the practical. Don't misunderstand me! At present, he is strenuous only intellectually; and has given no definite sign of preference, as regards a vocation in life. But he seems to me to be one practical in this sense, that his theorems will shape life for him, directly; that he will always seek, as a matter of course, the effective equivalent to—the line of being which shall be the proper continuation of—his line of thinking. This intellectual rectitude, or candour, which to my mind has a kind of beauty in it, has reacted upon myself, I confess, with a searching quality." That "searching quality," indeed, many others also, people far from being intellectual, had experienced—an agitation of mind in his neighbourhood, oddly at variance with the composure of the young man's manner and surrounding, so jealously preserved.

In the crowd of spectators at the skating, whose eyes followed, so well-satisfied, the movements of Sebastian van Storck, were the mothers of marriageable daughters, who presently became the suitors of this rich and distinguished youth, introduced to them, as now grown to man's estate, by his delighted parents. Dutch aristocracy had put forth all its graces to become the winter morn: and it was characteristic of the period that the artist tribe was there, on a grand footing,—in waiting, for the lights and shadows they liked best. The artists were in truth, an important body just then, as a natural consequence of the nation's hard-won prosperity; helping it to a full consciousness of the genial yet delicate homeliness it loved, for which it had fought so bravely, and was ready at any moment to fight anew, against man or the sea. Thomas de Keyser, who understood better than any one else the kind of quaint new Atticism which had found its way into the world over those waste salt marches, wondering whether quite its finest type as he understood it could ever actually be seen there, saw it at last, in lively motion, in the person of Sebastian van Storck, and desired to paint his portrait. A little to his surprise, the young man declined the offer; not graciously, as was thought.

Holland, just then, was reposing on its laurels after its long contest with Spain, in a short period of complete wellbeing. before troubles of another kind should beset it. That a darker time might return again, was clearly enough felt by Sebastian the elder—a time like that of William the Silent, with its insane civil animosities, which would demand similarly energetic personalities, and offer them similar opportunities. And then, it was part of his honest geniality of character

to admire those who "get on" in the world. Himself had been, almost from boyhood, in contact with great affairs. A member of the States-General which had taken so hardly the kingly airs of Frederick Henry, he had assisted at the Congress of Munster, and figures conspicuously in Terburgh's picture of that assembly, which had finally established Holland as a first-rate power. The heroism by which the national wellbeing had been achieved was still of recent memory—the air full of its reverberation, and great movement. There was a tradition to be maintained; the sword by no means resting in its sheath. The age was still fitted to evoke a generous ambition; and this son, from whose natural gifts there was so much to hope for, might play his part, at least as a diplomatist, if the present quiet continued. Had not the learned man said that his natural disposition would lead him out always upon practice? And in truth, the memory of that Silent hero had its fascination for the youth. When, about this time, Peter de Keyser, Thomas's brother, unveiled at last his tomb of wrought bronze and marble in the *Nieuwe Kerk* at Delft, the young Sebastian was one of a small company present, and relished much the cold and abstract simplicity of the monument, so conformable to the great, abstract, and unuttered force of the hero who slept beneath.

In complete contrast to all that is abstract or cold in art, the home of Sebastian, the family mansion of the Storcks—a house, the front of which still survives in one of those patient architectural pieces by Jan van der Heyde—was, in its minute and busy wellbeing, like an epitome of Holland itself with all the good-fortune of its "thriving genius" reflected, quite spontaneously, in the national taste. The nation had learned to content itself with a religion which told little, or not at all, on the outsides of things. But we may fancy that something of the religious spirit had gone, according to the law of the transmutation of forces, into the scrupulous care for cleanliness, into the grave, old-world, conservative beauty of Dutch houses, which meant that the life people maintained in them was normally affectionate and pure.

The most curious florists of Holland were ambitious to supply the Burgomaster van Storck with the choicest products of their skill for the garden spread below the windows on either side of the portico, and along the central avenue of hoary beeches which led to it. Naturally this house, within a mile of the city of Haarlem, became a resort of the artists, then mixing freely in great society, giving and receiving hints as to the domestic picturesque. Creatures of leisure—of leisure on both sides—they were the appropriate complement of Dutch prosperity, as it was understood just then. Sebastian the elder could almost have wished his son to be one of them: it was the next best

thing to the being an influential publicist or statesman. The Dutch had just begun to see what a picture their country was—its canals, and *boomtuin*, and endless, broadly-lighted meadows, and thousands of miles of quaint water-side: and their painters, the first true masters of landscape for its own sake, were further informing them in the matter. They were bringing proof, for all who cared to see, of the wealth of colour there was all around them in this, supposably, sad land. Above all, they developed the old Low-country taste for interiors. Those innumerable *genre* pieces—conversation, music, play—were in truth the equivalent of novel-reading for that day; its own actual life, in its own proper circumstances, reflected in various degrees of idealisation, with no diminution of the sense of reality (that is to say) but with more and more purged and perfected delightfulness of interest. Themselves illustrating, as every student of their history knows, the good-fellowship of family life, it was the ideal of that life which these artists depicted; the ideal of home in a country where the preponderant interest of life, after all, could not well be out of doors. Of the earth earthy—genuine red earth of the old Adam—it was an ideal very different from that which the sacred Italian painters had evoked from the life of Italy, yet, in its best types, was not without a kind of natural religiousness. And in the achievement of a type of beauty so national and vernacular, the votaries of purely Dutch art might well feel that the Italianisers, like Berghem, Boll, and Jan Weenix went so far afield in vain.

The fine organisation and acute intelligence of Sebastian would have made him an effective connoisseur of the arts, as he showed by the justice of his remarks in those assemblies of the artists which his father so much loved. But in truth the arts were a matter he could but just tolerate. Why add, by a forced and artificial production, to the monotonous tide of competing, fleeting existence? Only, finding so much fine art actually about him, he was compelled (so to speak) to adjust himself to it; to ascertain and accept that in it which should least collide with, or might even carry forward a little, his own characteristic tendencies. Obviously somewhat jealous of his intellectual interests, he loved inanimate nature, it might have been thought, better than man. He cared nothing, indeed, for the warm sandbanks of Wynants, nor for those eerie relics of the ancient Dutch woodland which survive in Hobbema and Ruysdael, still less for the highly-coloured sceneries of the academic band at Rome, in spite of the escape they provide one into clear breadth of atmosphere. For though Sebastian van Storck refused to travel, he loved the distant—enjoyed the sense of things seen from a distance, carrying us, as on wide wings of space itself, far out of one's actual surrounding. His preference

in the matter of art was, therefore, for those prospects *à vol d'oiseau*—of the caged bird on the wing at last—of which Rubens had the secret, and still more Philip de Koninck, four of whose choicest works occupied the four walls of his chamber; visionary escapes, north, south, east, and west, into a wide-open though, it must be confessed, a somewhat sullen land. For the fourth of them he had exchanged with his mother a marvellously vivid Metsu, lately bequeathed to him, in which she herself was presented. They were the sole ornaments he permitted himself. From the midst of the busy and busy-looking house, crowded with the furniture and the pretty little toys of many generations, a long passage led the rare visitor up a winding staircase, and (again at the end of a long passage) he found himself as if shut off from the whole talkative Dutch world, and in the embrace of that wonderful quiet which is also possible in Holland at its height all around him. It was here that Sebastian could yield himself, with the only sort of love he had ever felt, to the supremacy of his difficult thoughts.—A kind of *empty* place! Here, you felt, all had been mentally put to rights by the working-out of a long equation, which had zero is equal to zero for its result. Here one did, and perhaps felt, nothing; one only thought. Of living creatures only birds came there freely, the sea-birds especially, to attract and detain which there were all sorts of ingenious contrivances about the windows, such as one may see in the cottage sceneries of Jan Steen and others. There was something, doubtless, of his passion for distance in this welcoming of the creatures of the air. An extreme simplicity in their manner of life was, indeed, characteristic of many a distinguished Hollander—William the Silent, Baruch de Spinoza, the brothers de Witt. But the simplicity of Sebastian van Storck was something different from that, and certainly nothing democratic. His mother thought him like one disembarassing himself carefully, and little by little, of all impediments, habituating himself gradually to make shift with as little as possible, in preparation for a long journey.

The Burgomaster van Storck entertained a party of friends, consisting chiefly of his favourite artists, one summer evening. The guests were seen arriving on foot in the fine weather, some of them accompanied by their wives and daughters, against the light of the low sun, falling red on the old trees of the avenue and the faces of those who advanced along it:—Willem van Aelst, expecting to find hints for a flower-portrait in the exotics which would decorate the banqueting-room; Gerard Dow, to feed his eye, amid all that glittering luxury, on the combat between candle-light and the last rays of the departing sun; Thomas de Keyser, to catch by stealth the likeness of Sebastian the younger. Albert Cuyt was there, who, developing the latent gold

in Rembrandt, had brought into his native Dordrecht a heavy wealth of sunshine, as exotic as those flowers or the eastern carpets on the Burgomaster's tables, with Hooch, the in-door Cuyp, and Willem van de Velde, who painted those shore-pieces with gay ships of war, such as he loved, for his patron's cabinet. Thomas de Keyser came, in company with his brother Peter, his niece, and young Mr. Nicholas Stone from England, pupil of that brother Peter, who afterwards married the niece. For the life of Dutch artists, too, was exemplary in matters of domestic relationship, its history telling many a cheering story of mutual faith in misfortune. Hardly less exemplary was the comradeship which they displayed among themselves, obscuring their own best gifts sometimes, one in the mere accessories of another man's work, so that they came together to-night with no fear of falling out, and spoiling the musical interludes of Madame van Storck in the large back parlour. A little way behind the other guests, three of them together, son, grandson, and the grandfather, moving slowly, came the Hondcoeters—Giles, Gybrecht, and Melchior. They led the party before the house was entered, by fading light, to see the curious poultry of the Burgomaster go to roost; and it was almost night when the supper-room was reached at last. The occasion was an important one to Sebastian, and to others through him. For, (was it the music of the duets? he asked himself next morning, with a certain distaste as he remembered it all, or the heady Spanish wines poured out so freely in those narrow but deep Venetian glasses?) on this evening he approached more nearly than he had ever yet done to Mademoiselle van Westrheene, as she sat there beside the *clavessin* looking very ruddy and fresh in her white satin, trimmed with glossy crimson swans-down.

So genially attempered, so warm, was life become, in the land of which Pliny had spoken as scarcely dry land at all. And, in truth, the sea which Sebastian so much loved, and with so great a satisfaction and sense of wellbeing in every hint of its nearness, is never far distant in Holland. Invading all places, stealing under one's feet, insinuating itself everywhere along an endless network of canals (by no means such formal channels as we understand by the name, but picturesque rivers, with sedge banks and haunted by innumerable birds) its incidents present themselves oddly even in one's park or woodland walks; the ship in full sail appearing suddenly among the great trees or above the garden wall, where we had no suspicion of the presence of water. In the very conditions of life in such a country there was a standing force of pathos. The country itself shared the uncertainty of the individual human life; and there was pathos also in the constantly renewed, heavily-taxed labour, necessary to keep the native soil, fought

for so unselfishly, there at all, with a warfare that must still be maintained when that other struggle with the Spaniard was over. But though Sebastian liked to breathe, so nearly, the sea and its influences, those were considerations he scarcely entertained. In his passion for *Schwindsucht*—we haven't the word—he found it pleasant to think of the resistless element which left one hardly a foot-space amidst the yielding sand; of the old beds of lost rivers, surviving now only as deeper channels in the sea; of the remains of a certain ancient town, which within men's memory had lost its few remaining inhabitants, and, with its already empty tombs, dissolved and disappeared in the flood.

It happened, on occasion of an exceptionally low tide that some remarkable relics were exposed to view on the coast of the island of Vieeland. A countryman's waggon overtaken by the tide, as he returned with merchandise from the shore you might have supposed, but for a touch of grace in the construction of the thing—lightly wrought timber-work, united and adorned by a multitude of brass fastenings, like the work of children for their simplicity, while the rude, stiff chair, or throne, set upon it, seemed to distinguish it as a chariot of state. To some antiquarians it told the story of the overwhelming of one of the chiefs of the old primeval people of Holland, amid all his gala array, in a great storm. But it was another view which Sebastian preferred; that this object was sepulchral, namely, in its motive—the one surviving relic of a grand burial, in the ancient manner, of a king or hero, whose very tomb was wasted away.—*Sunt metis metæ!* There came with it the odd fancy that he himself would like to have been dead and gone as long ago, with a kind of envy of those whose deceasing was so long since over.

On more peaceful days he would ponder Pliny's account of those primeval forefathers, but without Pliny's contempt for them. A cloyed Roman might despise their humble existence, fixed by necessity from age to age, and with no desire of change, as "the ocean poured in its flood twice a day, making it uncertain whether the country was a part of the continent or of the sea." But for his part Sebastian found something of poetry in all that, as he conceived what thoughts the old Hollander might have had at his fishing, with nets themselves woven of seaweed, waiting carefully for his drink on the heavy rains, and taking refuge, as the flood rose, on the sand-hills, in a little hut constructed but airily on tall stakes, conformable to the elevation of the highest tides, like a navigator, thought the learned writer, when the sea was risen, like a shipwrecked mariner when it was retired. For the fancy of Sebastian he lived with great breadths of calm light above and around him, influenced by, and, in a sense, living upon them,

and surely might well complain, though to Pliny's so infinite surprise, on being made a Roman citizen.

And certainly Sebastian van Storck did not felicitate his people on the luck which, in the words of another old writer, "hath disposed them to so thriving a genius". Their restless ingenuity in making and maintaining dry land where nature had willed the sea, was even more like the industry of animals than had been that life of their forefathers. Away with that tetchy, feverish, unworthy agitation! with this and that, all too importunate, motive of interest! And then, "My son!" said his father, "be stimulated to action!" he, too, thinking of that heroic industry which had triumphed over nature precisely where the contest had been most difficult.

Yet, in truth, Sebastian was forcibly taken by the simplicity of a great affection, as set forth in an incident of real life of which he heard just then. The eminent Grotius being condemned to perpetual imprisonment, his wife determined to share his fate, alleviated only by the reading of books sent by friends. The books, finished, were returned in a great chest. In this chest the wife enclosed the husband, and was able to reply to the objections of the soldiers who carried it complaining of its weight, with a self-control, which she maintained till the captive was in safety, herself remaining to face the consequences; and there was a kind of absoluteness of affection in that, which attracted Sebastian for a while to ponder on the practical forces which shape men's lives. Had he turned, indeed, to a practical career it would have been less in the direction of the military or political life than of another form of enterprise popular with his countrymen. In the eager, gallant life of that age, if the sword fell for a moment into its sheath, they were for starting off on perilous voyages to the regions of frost and snow in search after that "North-Western passage", for the discovery of which the States-General had offered large rewards. Sebastian, in effect, found a charm in the thought of that still, drowsy, spellbound world of perpetual ice, as in art and life he could always tolerate the sea. Admiral-general of Holland, as painted by Van der Helst, with a marine background by Backhuizen:—at moments his father could fancy him so.

There was still another very different sort of character to which Sebastian would let his thoughts stray, without check, for a time. His mother, whom he much resembled outwardly, a Catholic from Brabant, had had saints in her family, and from time to time the mind of Sebastian had been occupied on the subject of monastic life, its quiet, its negation. The portrait of a certain Carthusian prior, which, like the famous statue of Saint Bruno, the first Carthusian, in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli at Rome, could it have spoken,

would have said, "Silence!" kept strange company with the painted visages of men of affairs. A great theological strife was then raging in Holland. Grave ministers of religion assembled sometimes, as in the painted scene by Rembrandt, in the Burgomaster's house, and once not however in their company, came a renowned young Jewish divine, Baruch de Spinoza, with whom, most unexpectedly, Sebastian found himself in sympathy, meeting the young Jew's far-reaching thoughts half-way, to the confirmation of his own; and he did not know that his visitor, very ready with the pencil, had taken his likeness as they talked on the fly-leaf of his note-book. Alive to that theological disturbance in the air all around him, he refused to be moved by it, as essentially a strife on small matters, anticipating a vagrant regret which may have visited many other minds since, the regret, namely, that the old, pensive, use-and-wont Catholicism, which had accompanied the nation's earlier struggle for existence, and consoled it therein, had been taken from it. And for himself, indeed, what impressed him in that old Catholicism was a kind of lull in it—a lulling power—like that of the monotonous organ-music, which Holland, Catholic or not, still so greatly loves. But what he could not away with in the Catholic religion was its unfailing drift towards the concrete—the positive imageries of a faith, so richly beset with persons, things, historical incidents.

Rigidly logical in the method of his inferences, he attained the poetic quality only by the audacity with which he conceived the whole sublime extension of his premises. The contrast was a strange one between the careful, the almost petty fineness of his personal surrounding—all the elegant conventionalities of life, in that rising Dutch family—and the mortal coldness of a temperament, the intellectual tendencies of which seemed to necessitate straightforward flight from all that was positive. He seemed, if one may say so, in love with death; preferring winter to summer; finding only a tranquillising influence in the thought of the earth beneath our feet cooling down for ever from its old cosmic heat; watching pleasurably how their colours fled out of things, and the long sand-bank in the sea, which had been the rampart of a town, was washed down in its turn. One of his acquaintance, a penurious young poet, who, having nothing in his pockets but the imaginative or otherwise barely potential gold of manuscript verses, would have grasped so eagerly, had they lain within his reach, at the elegant outsides of life, thought the fortunate Sebastian, possessed of every possible opportunity of that kind, yet bent only on dispensing with it, certainly a most puzzling and comfortless creature. A few only, half discerning what was in his mind, would fain have shared his intellectual clearness, and found a kind of

beauty in this youthful enthusiasm for an abstract theorem. Extremes meeting, his cold and dispassionate detachment from all that is most attractive to ordinary minds came to have the impressiveness of a great passion. And for the most part, people had loved him; feeling instinctively that somewhere there must be the justification of his difference from themselves. It was like being in love: or it was an intellectual malady, such as pleaded for forbearance, like bodily sickness, and gave at times a resigned and touching sweetness to what he did and said. Only once, at a moment of the wild popular excitement which at that period was easy to provoke in Holland, there was a certain group of persons who would have shut him up as no well-wisher to, and perhaps a plotter against, the common-weal. A single traitor might cut the dykes in an hour, in the interest of the English or the French. Or, had he already committed some treasonable act, who was so anxious to expose no writing of his that he left his very letters unsigned, and there were little stratagems to get specimens of his fair manuscript? For with all his breadth of mystic intention, he was persistent; as the hours crept on, to leave all the inevitable details of life at least in order, in equation. And all his singularities appeared to be summed up in his refusal to take his place in the life-sized family group (*très distingué et très soigné*, remarks a modern critic of the work) painted about this time. His mother expostulated with him on the matter:—she must needs feel, a little icily, the emptiness of hope, and something more than the due measure of cold in things for a woman of her age, in the presence of a son who desired but to fade out of the world like a breath—and she suggested filial duty. “Good mother,” he answered, “there are duties towards the intellect also, which women can but rarely understand.”

The artists and their wives were come to supper again, with the Burgomaster van Storck. Mademoiselle van Westrheene was also come, with her sister and mother. The girl was by this time fallen in love with Sebastian; and she was one of the few who, in spite of his terrible coldness, really loved him for himself. But though of good birth she was poor, while Sebastian could not but perceive that he had many suitors of his wealth. In truth, Madame van Westrheene, her mother, did wish to marry this daughter into the great world, and plied many arts to that end, such as “daughterful” mothers use. Her healthy freshness of mien and mind, her ruddy beauty, some showy presents that had passed, were of a piece with the ruddy colouring of the very house these people lived in; and for a moment the cheerful warmth that may be felt in life seemed to come very close to him,—to come forth, and enfold him. Meantime the girl herself taking note of this, that on a former occasion of their meeting he had seemed

likely to respond to her inclination, and that his father would readily consent to such a marriage, surprised him on the sudden with those coquetries and importunities, all those little arts of love, which often succeed with men. Only, to Sebastian they seemed opposed to that absolute nature we suppose in love. And while, in the eyes of all around him to-night, this courtship seemed to promise him, thus early in life, a kind of quiet happiness, he was coming to an estimate of the situation, with strict regard to that ideal of a calm, intellectual indifference, of which he was the sworn chevalier. Set in the cold, hard light of that ideal, this girl, with the pronounced personal views of her mother, and in the very effectiveness of arts prompted by a real affection, bringing the warm life they prefigured so close to him, seemed vulgar! And still he felt himself bound in honour; or judged from their manner that she and those about them thought him thus bound. He did not reflect on the inconsistency of the feeling of honour (living, as it does essentially, upon the concrete and minute detail of social relationship) for one who, on principle, set so slight a value on anything whatever that is merely relative in its character.

The guests, lively and late, were almost pledging the betrothed in the rich wine. Only Sebastian's mother knew; and at that advanced hour, while the company were thus intently occupied, drew away the Burgomaster to confide to him the misgiving she felt, grown to a great height just then. The young man had slipped from the assembly; but certainly not with Mademoiselle van Westrheene, who was suddenly withdrawn also. And she never appeared again in the world. Already, next day, with the rumour that Sebastian had left his home, it was known that the expected marriage would not take place. The girl, indeed, alleged something in the way of a cause on her part; but seemed to fade away continually afterwards, and in the eyes of all who saw her was like one perishing of wounded pride. But to make a clean breast of her poor girlish worldliness, before she became a *béguine*, she confessed to her mother the receipt of the letter—the cruel letter that had killed her. And in effect, the first copy of this letter, written with a very deliberate fineness, rejecting her—accusing her, so natural, and simply loyal of a vulgar coarseness of character—was found, oddly tacked on, as their last word, to the studious record of the abstract thoughts which had been the real business of Sebastian's life, in the room whither his mother went to seek him next day, littered with the fragments of the one portrait of him in existence.

The neat and elaborate manuscript volume, of which this letter formed the final page (odd transition! by which a train of thought so abstract drew its conclusion in the sphere of action) afforded at length to the few who were interested in him a much-coveted insight into

the curiosity of his existence; and I pause just here to indicate in outline the kind of reasoning through which, making the "Infinite" his beginning and his end, Sebastian had come to think all definite forms of being, the warm pressure of life, the cry of nature itself, no more than a troublesome irritation of the surface of the one absolute mind, a passing vexatious thought or uneasy dream there, at its height of petulant importunity in the eager, human creature.

The volume was, indeed, a kind of treatise to be:—a hard, systematic, well-concatenated train of thought, still implicated in the circumstances of a journal. Freed from the accidents of that particular literary form with its unavoidable details of place and occasion, the theoretic strain would have been found mathematically continuous. The already so weary Sebastian might perhaps never have taken in hand, or succeeded in, this detachment of his thoughts; every one of which, beginning with himself, as the peculiar and intimate apprehension of this or that particular day and hour, seemed still to protest against such disturbance, as if reluctant to part from those accidental associations of the personal history which had prompted it, and so become a purely intellectual abstraction.

The series began with Sebastian's boyish enthusiasm for a strange, fine saying of Doctor Baruch de Spinoza, concerning the Divine Love:—That whoso loveth God truly must not expect to be loved by him in return. In mere reaction against an actual surrounding of which every circumstance tended to make him a finished egotist, that bold assertion defined for him the ideal of an intellectual disinterestedness, of a domain of unimpassioned mind, with the desire to put one's subjective side out of the way, and let pure reason speak.

And what pure reason affirmed in the first place, as the "beginning of wisdom", was that the world is but a thought, or a series of thoughts: that it exists, therefore, solely in mind. It showed him, as he fixed the mental eye with more and more of self-absorption on the phenomena of his intellectual existence, a picture or vision of the universe as actually the product so far as he really knew it, of his own lonely thinking power—of himself, there, thinking: as being zero without him: and as possessing a perfectly homogeneous unity in that fact. "Things that have nothing in common with each other," said the axiomatic reason, "cannot be understood or explained by means of each other". But to pure reason things discovered themselves as being, in their essence, thoughts:—all things, even the most opposite things, mere transmutations of a single power, the power of thought. All was but conscious mind. Therefore, all the more exclusively, he must minister to mind, to the intellectual power, submitting himself to the sole direction of that, whithersoever it might lead him. Every-

thing must be referred to, and, as it were, changed into the terms of that, if its essential value was to be ascertained. "Joy," he said, anticipating Spinoza—that, for the attainment of which men are ready to surrender all beside—"is but the name of a passion in which the mind passes to a greater perfection of power of thinking; as grief is the name of the passion in which it passes to a less."

Looking backward for the generative source of that creative power of thought in him, from his own mysterious intellectual being to its first cause, he still reflected, as one can but do, the enlarged pattern of himself into the vague region of hypothesis. In this way, some, at all events, would have explained his mental process. To him that process was nothing less than the apprehension, the revelation, of the greatest and most real of ideas—the true substance of all things. He, too, with his vividly-coloured existence, with this picturesque and sensuous world of Dutch art and Dutch reality all around that would fain have made him the prisoner of its colours, its genial warmth, its struggle for life, its selfish and crafty love, was but a transient perturbation of the one absolute mind; of which, indeed, all finite things whatever, time itself, the most durable achievements of nature and man, and all that seems most like independent energy, are no more than petty accidents or affections. Theorem and corollary! Thus they stood:

"There can be only one substance: (corollary) it is the greatest of errors to think that the non-existent, the world of finite things seen and felt, really is: (theorem) *for, whatever is, is but in that:* (practical corollary): one's wisdom, therefore, consists in hastening, so far as may be, the action of those forces which tend to the restoration of equilibrium, the calm surface of the absolute, untroubled mind, to *tabula rasa*, by the extinction in one's self of all that is but correlative to the finite illusion—by the suppression of ourselves."

In the loneliness which was gathering round him, and, oddly enough, as a somewhat surprising thing, he wondered whether there were, or had been, others possessed of like thoughts, ready to welcome any such as his veritable compatriots. And in fact he became aware just then, in readings difficult indeed, but which from their all-absorbing interest seemed almost like an illicit pleasure, a sense of kinship with certain older minds. The study of many an earlier adventurous theorist satisfied his curiosity as the record of daring physical adventure, for instance, might satisfy the curiosity of the healthy. It was a tradition—a constant tradition—that daring thought of his; an echo, or haunting recurrent voice of the human soul itself, and as such sealed with natural truth, which certain minds would not fail to heed; discerning also, if they were really loyal to themselves, its practical conclusion.—The

one alone is: and all things beside are but its passing affections, which have no necessary or proper right to be.

As but such "accidents" or "affections", indeed, these might have been found, within the circumference of that one infinite creative thinker, some scope for the joy and love of the creature. There have been dispositions in which that abstract theorem has only induced a renewed value for the finite interests around and within us. Centre of heat and light, truly nothing has seemed to lie beyond the touch of its perpetual summer. It has allied itself to the poetical or artistic sympathy, which feels challenged to acquaint itself with and explore the various forms of finite existence all the more intimately, just because of that sense of one lively spirit circulating through all things—a tiny particle of the one soul, in the sunbeam, or the leaf. Sebastian van Storck, on the contrary, was determined, perhaps by some inherited satiety or fatigue in his nature, to the opposite issue of the practical dilemma. For him, that one abstract being was as the pallid Arctic sun, disclosing itself over the dead level of a glacial, a barren and absolutely lonely sea. The lively purpose of life had been frozen out of it. What he must admire, and love if he could, was "equilibrium", the void, the *tabula rasa*, into which, through all those apparent energies of man and nature, that in truth are but forces of disintegration, the world was really settling. And, himself a mere circumstance in a fatalistic series, to which the clay of the potter was no sufficient parallel, he could not expect to be "loved in return". At first, indeed, he had a kind of delight in his thoughts—in the eager pressure forward, to whatsoever conclusion, of a rigid intellectual gymnastic, which was like the making of Euclid. Only, little by little, under the freezing influence of such propositions, the theoretic energy itself, and with it his old eagerness for truth, the care to track it from proposition to proposition, was chilled out of him. In fact, the conclusion was there already, and might have been foreseen, in the premises. By a singular perversity, it seemed to him that every one of those passing "affections"—he too, alas! at times—was for ever trying to be, to assert *itself*, to maintain its isolated and petty self, by a kind of practical lie in things; although through every incident of its hypothetic existence it had protested that its proper function was to die. Surely! those transient affections marred the freedom, the truth, the beatific calm, of the absolute selfishness, which could not, if it would, pass beyond the circumference of itself; to which, at times, with a fantastic sense of wellbeing, he was capable of a sort of fanatical devotion. And those, as he conceived, were his moments of genuine theoretic insight, in which, under the abstract "perpetual light", he died to self; while the intellect, after all, had attained a freedom of its own through the

vigorous act which assured him that, as nature was but a thought of his, so himself also was but the passing thought of God.

No! rather a puzzle only, an anomaly, upon that one, white, unruffled consciousness! His first principle once recognised, all the rest, the whole array of propositions down to the heartless practical conclusion, must follow of themselves. Detachment: to hasten hence: to fold up one's whole self, as a vesture put aside: to anticipate, by such individual force as he could find in him, the slow disintegration by which nature herself is levelling the eternal hills:—here would be the secret of peace, of such dignity and truth as there could be in a world which after all was essentially an illusion. For Sebastian at least, the world and the individual alike had been divested of all effective purpose. The most vivid of finite objects, the dramatic episodes of Dutch history, the brilliant personalities which had found their parts to play in them, that golden art, surrounding us with an ideal world, beyond which the real world is discernible indeed, but etherealised by the medium through which it comes to one: all this, for most men so powerful a link to existence, only set him on the thought of escape—means of escape—into a formless and nameless infinite world, quite evenly grey. The very emphasis of those objects, their importunity to the eye, the ear, the finite intelligence, was but the measure of their distance from what really is. One's personal presence, the presence, such as it is, of the most incisive things and persons around us, could only lessen by so much, that which really is. To restore *tabula rasa*, then, by a continual effort at self-effacement! Actually proud at times of his curious, well-reasoned nihilism, he could but regard what is called the business of life as no better than a trifling and wearisome delay. Bent on making sacrifice of the rich existence possible for him, as he would readily have sacrificed that of other people, to the bare and formal logic of the answer to a query (never proposed at all to entirely healthy minds) regarding the remote conditions and tendencies of that existence, he did not reflect that if others had inquired as curiously as himself the world could never have come so far at all—that the fact of its having come so far was itself a weighty exception of his hypothesis. His odd devotion, soaring or sinking into fanaticism, into a kind of religious mania, with what was really a vehement assertion of his individual will, he had formulated duty as the principle to hinder as little as possible what he called the restoration of equilibrium, the restoration of the primary consciousness to itself—its relief from that uneasy, tetchy, unworthy dream of a world, made so ill, or dreamt so weakly—to forget, to be forgotten.

And at length this dark fanaticism, losing the support of his pride in the mere novelty of a reasoning so hard and dry, turned round upon

him as our fanaticism will in black melancholy. The theoretic or imaginative desire to urge Time's creeping footsteps, was felt now as the physical fatigue which leaves the book or the letter unfinished, or finishes eagerly out of hand, for mere finishing's sake, unimportant business. Strange! that the presence to the mind of a metaphysical abstraction should have had this power over one so fortunately endowed for the reception of the sensible world. It could hardly have been so with him but for the concurrence of physical causes with the influences proper to a mere thought. The moralist, indeed, might have noted that a meaner kind of pride, the morbid fear of vulgarity, lent secret strength to the intellectual prejudice, which realised duty as the renunciation of all finite objects, the fastidious refusal to be or do any limited thing. But besides this it was legible in his own admissions from time to time, that the body, following, as it does with powerful temperaments, the lead of mind and the will, the intellectual consumption (so to term it) had been concurrent with, had strengthened and been strengthened by, a vein of physical *phthisis*—by a merely physical accident, after all, of his bodily constitution, such as might have taken a different turn, had another accident fixed his home among the hills instead of on the shore. Is it only the result of disease? he would ask himself sometimes with a sudden suspicion of his intellectual cogency—this persuasion that myself, and all that surrounds me, are but a diminution of that which really is?—this unkindly melancholy?

The journal, with that "cruel" letter to Mademoiselle van Westreene coming as the last step in the rigid process of theoretic deduction circulated among the curious; and people made their judgments upon it. There were some who held that such opinions should be suppressed by law; that they were, or might become, dangerous to society. Perhaps it was the confessor of his mother who thought of the matter most justly. The aged man smiled, observing how, even for minds by no means superficial, the mere dress it wears alters the look of a familiar thought; with a happy sort of smile, as he added (reflecting that such truth as there was in Sebastian's theory was duly covered by the propositions of his own creed, and quoting Sebastian's favourite pagan wisdom from the lips of Saint Paul) "in Him, we live, and move, and have our being."

Next day, as Sebastian escaped to the sea under the long, monotonous line of wind-mills, in comparative calm of mind—reaction of that pleasant morning from the madness of the night before—he was making light, or trying to make light, with some success, of his late distress. He would fain have thought it a small matter, to be adequately set at rest for him by certain well-tested influences of external nature,

in a long visit to the place he liked best: a desolate house, amid the sands of the Helder, one of the old lodgings of his family property now, rather, of the sea-birds, and almost surrounded by the encroaching tide, though there were still relics enough of hardy, sweet things about it, to form what was to Sebastian the most perfect garden in Holland. Here he could make "equation" between himself and what was not himself, and set things in order, in preparation towards such deliberate and final change in his manner of living as circumstances so clearly necessitated.

As he stayed in this place, with one or two silent serving people, sudden rising of the wind altered, as it might seem, in a few dark, tempestuous hours, the entire world around him. The strong wind changed not again for fourteen days, and its effect was a permanent one; so that people might have fancied that an enemy had indeed cut the dykes somewhere—a pinhole enough to wreck the ship of Holland, or at least this portion of it, which underwent an inundation of the sea the like of which had not occurred in that province for half a century. Only, when the body of Sebastian was found, apparently not long after death, a child lay asleep, swaddled warmly in his heavy furs, in an upper room of the old tower, to which the tide was almost risen: though the building still stood firmly, and still with the means of life in plenty. And it was in the saving of this child, with a great effort, as certain circumstances seemed to indicate, that Sebastian had lost his life.

His parents were come to seek him, believing him bent on self-destruction, and were almost glad to find him thus. A learned physician, moreover, endeavoured to comfort his mother by remarking that in any case he must certainly have died ere many years were passed, slowly, perhaps painfully, of a disease then coming into the world; disease begotten by the fogs of that country—waters, he observed, not in their place, "above the firmament"—on people grown somewhat over-delicate in their nature by the effects of modern luxury.

FRANCE

TWO EARLY FRENCH STORIES

DENYS L'AUXERROIS

SUSPENDED JUDGMENT

(From *Gaston De La Tour.*)

A PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

TWO EARLY FRENCH STORIES

THE history of the Renaissance ends in France, and carries us away from Italy to the beautiful cities of the country of the Loire. But it was in France also, in a very important sense, that the Renaissance had begun. French writers, who are fond of connecting the creations of Italian genius with a French origin, who tell us how Saint Francis of Assisi took not his name only, but all those notions of chivalry and romantic love which so deeply penetrated his thoughts, from a French source, how Boccaccio borrowed the outlines of his stories from the old French *fabliaux*, and how Dante himself expressly connects the origin of the art of miniature-painting with the city of Paris, have often dwelt on this notion of a Renaissance in the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, a Renaissance within the limits of the middle age itself—a brilliant, but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done in the fifteenth. The word *Renaissance*, indeed, is now generally used to denote not merely the revival of classical antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century, and to which the word was first applied, but a whole complex movement, of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom. For us the Renaissance is the name of a many-sided but yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt, urging those who experience this desire to search out first one and then another means of intellectual or imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not only to the discovery of old and forgotten sources of this enjoyment, but to the divination of fresh sources thereof—new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art. Of such feeling there was a great outbreak in the end of the twelfth and beginning of the following century. Here and there, under rare and happy conditions, in Pointed architecture, in the doctrines of romantic love, in the poetry of Provence, the rude strength of the middle age turns to sweetness; and the taste for sweetness generated there becomes the seed of the classical revival in it, prompting it constantly to seek after the springs of perfect sweetness in the Hellenic world. And coming after a long period in which this instinct had been crushed, that true “dark age”, in which so many sources of intellectual and imaginative enjoyment had actually

disappeared, this outbreak is rightly called a Renaissance, a revival.

Theories which bring into connexion with each other modes of thought and feeling, periods of taste, forms of art and poetry, which the narrowness of men's minds constantly tends to oppose to each other, have a great stimulus for the intellect, and are almost always worth understanding. It is so with this theory of a Renaissance within the middle age, which seeks to establish a continuity between the most characteristic work of that period, the sculpture of Chartres, the windows of Le Mans, and the work of the later Renaissance, the work of Jean Cousin and Germain Pilon, thus healing that rupture between the middle age and the Renaissance which has so often been exaggerated. But it is not so much the ecclesiastical art of the middle age, its sculpture and painting—work certainly done in a great measure for pleasure's sake, in which even a secular, a rebellious spirit often betrays itself—but rather its profane poetry, the poetry of Provence, and the magnificent aftergrowth of that poetry in Italy and France, which those French writers have in view when they speak of this medieval Renaissance. In that poetry, earthly passion, with its intimacy, its freedom, its variety—the liberty of the heart—makes itself felt; and the name of Abelard, the great scholar and the great lover, connects the expression of this liberty of heart with the free play of human intelligence around all subjects presented to it, with the liberty of the intellect, as that age understood it.

Every one knows the legend of Abelard, a legend hardly less passionate, certainly not less characteristic of the middle age, than the legend of Tannhäuser; how the famous and comely clerk, in whom Wisdom herself, self-possessed, pleasant, and discreet, seemed to sit enthroned, came to live in the house of a canon of the church of *Notre-Dame*, where dwelt a girl, Heloïse, believed to be the old priest's orphan niece; how the old priest had testified his love for her by giving her an education then unrivalled, so that rumour asserted that, through the knowledge of languages, enabling her to penetrate into the mysteries of the older world, she had become a sorceress, like the Celtic druidesses; and how as Abelard and Heloïse sat together at home there, to refine a little further on the nature of abstract ideas, "Love made himself of the party with them." You conceive the temptations of the scholar, who, in such dreamy tranquillity, amid the bright and busy spectacle of the "Island", lived in a world of something like shadows; and that for one who knew so well how to assign its exact value to every abstract thought, those restraints which lie on the consciences of other men had been relaxed. It appears that he composed many verses in the vulgar tongue: already the young men sang them on the quay below the house. Those songs, says M. de

Rémusat, were probably in the taste of the *Trouvères*, "of whom he was one of the first in date, or, so to speak, the predecessor". It is the same spirit which has moulded the famous "letters", written in the quaint Latin of the middle age.

At the foot of that early Gothic tower, which the next generation raised to grace the precincts of Abelard's school, on the "Mountain of Saint Geneviève", the historian Michelet sees in thought "a terrible assembly; not the hearers of Abelard alone, fifty bishops, twenty cardinals, two popes, the whole body of scholastic philosophy; not only the learned Heloise, the teaching of languages, and the Renaissance; but Arnold of Brescia—that is to say, the revolution." And so from the rooms of this shadowy house by the Seine side we see that spirit going abroad, with its qualities already well defined, its intimacy, its languid sweetness, its rebellion, its subtle skill in dividing the elements of human passion, its care for physical beauty, its worship of the body, which penetrated the early literature of Italy, and finds an echo even in Dante.

That Abelard is not mentioned in the *Divine Comedy* may appear a singular omission to the reader of Dante, who seems to have inwoven into the texture of his work whatever had impressed him as either effective in colour or spiritually significant among the recorded incidents of actual life. Nowhere in his great poem do we find the name, nor so much as an allusion to the story of one who had left so deep a mark on the philosophy of which Dante was an eager student, of whom in the *Latin Quarter*, and from the lips of scholar or teacher in the University of Paris, during his sojourn among them, he can hardly have failed to hear. We can only suppose that he had indeed considered the story and the man, and abstained from passing judgment as to his place in the scheme of "eternal justice".

In the famous legend of Tannhäuser, the erring knight makes his way to Rome, to seek absolution at the centre of Christian religion. "So soon," thought and said the Pope, "as the staff in his hand should bud and blossom, so soon might the soul of Tannhäuser be saved, and no sooner"; and it came to pass not long after that the dry wood of a staff which the Pope had carried in his hand was covered with leaves and flowers. So, in the cloister of Godstow, a petrified tree was shown of which the nuns told that the fair Rosamond, who had died among them, had declared that, the tree being then alive and green, it would be changed into stone at the hour of her salvation. When Abelard died, like Tannhäuser, he was on his way to Rome. What might have happened had he reached his journey's end is uncertain; and it is in this uncertain twilight that his relation to the general beliefs of his age has always remained. In this, as in other

things, he prefigures the character of the Renaissance, that movement in which, in various ways, the human mind wins for itself a new kingdom of feeling and sensation and thought, not opposed to but only beyond and independent of the spiritual system then actually realised. The opposition into which Abelard is thrown, which gives its colour to his career, which breaks his soul to pieces, is a no less subtle opposition than that between the merely professional, official, hireling ministers of that system, with their ignorant worship of system for its own sake, and the true child of light, the humanist, with reason and heart and senses quick, while theirs were almost dead. He reaches out towards, he attains, modes of ideal living, beyond the prescribed limits of that system, though in essential germ, it may be, contained within it. As always happens, the adherents of the poorer and narrower culture had no sympathy with, because no understanding of, a culture richer and more ample than their own. After the discovery of wheat they would still live upon acorns—*après l'invention du blé ils voulaient encore vivre du gland*; and would hear of no service to the higher needs of humanity with instruments not of their forging.

But the human spirit, bold through those needs, was too strong for them. Abelard and Heloïse write their letters—letters with a wonderful outpouring of soul—in medieval Latin; and Abelard, though he composes songs in the vulgar tongue, writes also in Latin those treatises in which he tries to find a ground of reality below the abstractions of philosophy, as one bent on trying all things by their congruity with human experience, who had felt the hand of Heloïse, and looked into her eyes, and tested the resources of humanity in her great and energetic nature. Yet it is only a little later, early in the thirteenth century, that French prose romance begins; and in one of the pretty volumes of the *Bibliothèque Elzevirienne* some of the most striking fragments of it may be found, edited with much intelligence. In one of these thirteenth-century stories, *Li Amitiez de Amis et Amile*, that free play of human affection, of the claims of which Abelard's story is an assertion, makes itself felt in the incidents of a great friendship, a friendship pure and generous, pushed to a sort of passionate exaltation, and more than faithful unto death. Such comradeship, though instances of it are to be found everywhere, is still especially a classical motive; Chaucer expressing the sentiment of it so strongly in an antique tale, that one knows not whether the love of both Palamon and Arcite for Emelya, or of those two for each other, is the chiefest subject of the *Knight's Tale*—

*He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therewithal he bleynte and cried, ah!
As that he stongen were unto the herte.*

What reader does not refer something of the bitterness of that cry to the spoiling, already foreseen, of the fair friendship, which had made the prison of the two lads sweet hitherto with its daily offices?

The friendship of Amis and Amile is deepened by the romantic circumstance of an entire personal resemblance between the two heroes, through which they pass for each other again and again, and thereby into many strange adventures; that curious interest of the *Doppelgänger*, which begins among the stars with the Dioscuri, being entwined in and out through all the incidents of the story, like an outward token of the inward similitude of their souls. With this, again, is connected, like a second reflexion of that inward similitude, the conceit of two marvellously beautiful cups, also exactly like each other—children's cups, of wood, but adorned with gold and precious stones. These two cups, which by their resemblance help to bring the friends together at critical moments, were given to them by the Pope, when he baptized them at Rome, whither the parents had taken them for that purpose, in gratitude for their birth. They cross and recross very strangely in the narrative, serving the two heroes almost like living things, and with that well-known effect of a beautiful object, kept constantly before the eye in a story or poem, of keeping sensation well awake, and giving a certain air of refinement to all the scenes into which it enters. That sense of fate, which hangs so much of the shaping of human life on trivial objects, like Othello's strawberry handkerchief, is thereby heightened, while witness is borne to the enjoyment of beautiful handiwork by primitive people, their simple wonder at it, so that they give it an oddly significant place among the factors of a human history.

Amis and Amile, then, are true to their comradeship through all trials; and in the end it comes to pass that at a moment of great need Amis takes the place of Amile in a tournament for life or death. "After this it happened that a leprosy fell upon Amis, so that his wife would not approach him, and wrought to strangle him. He departed, therefore, from his home, and at last prayed his servants to carry him to the house of Amile"; and it is in what follows that the curious strength of the piece shows itself:—

"His servants, willing to do as he commanded, carried him to the place where Amile was; and they began to sound their rattles before the court of Amile's house, as lepers are accustomed to do. And when Amile heard the noise he commanded one of his servants to carry meat and bread to the sick man, and the cup which was given to him at Rome filled with good wine. And when the servant had done as he was commanded, he returned and said, Sir, if I had not thy cup in my hand, I should believe that the cup which the sick man has was

thine, for they are alike, the one to the other, in height and fashion. And Amile said, Go quickly and bring him to me. And when Amis stood before his comrade Amile demanded of him who he was, and how he had gotten that cup. I am of Briquain le Chastel, answered Amis, and the cup was given to me by the Bishop of Rome, who baptized me. And when Amile heard that, he knew that it was his comrade Amis, who had delivered him from death, and won for him the daughter of the King of France to be his wife. And straightway he fell upon him, and began weeping greatly, and kissed him. And when his wife heard that, she ran out with her hair in disarray, weeping and distressed exceedingly, for she remembered that it was he who had slain the false Ardres. And thereupon they placed him in a fair bed, and said to him, Abide with us until God's will be accomplished in thee, for all we have is at thy service. So he and the two servants abode with them.

"And it came to pass one night, when Amis and Amile lay in one chamber without other companions, that God sent His angel Raphael to Amis, who said to him, Amis, art thou asleep? And he, supposing that Amile had called him, answered and said, I am not asleep, fair comrade! And the angel said to him, Thou hast answered well, for thou art the comrade of the heavenly citizens.—I am Raphael, the angel of our Lord, and am come to tell thee how thou mayest be healed; for thy prayers are heard. Thou shalt bid Amile, thy comrade, that he slay his two children and wash thee in their blood, and so thy body shall be made whole. And Amis said to him, Let not this thing be, that my comrade should become a murderer for my sake. But the angel said, It is convenient that he do this. And thereupon the angel departed.

"And Amile also, as if in sleep, heard those words; and he awoke and said, Who is it, my comrade, that hath spoken with thee? And Amis answered, No man; only I have prayed to our Lord, as I am accustomed. And Amile said, Not so! but some one hath spoken with thee. Then he arose and went to the door of the chamber; and finding it shut he said, Tell me, my brother, who it was said those words to thee to-night. And Amis began to weep greatly, and told him that it was Raphael, the angel of the Lord, who had said to him, Amis, our Lord commands thee that thou bid Amile slay his two children, and wash thee in their blood, and so thou shalt be healed of thy leprosy. And Amile was greatly disturbed at those words, and said, I would have given to thee my man-servants and my maid-servants and all my goods, and thou feignest that an angel hath spoken to thee that I should slay my two children. And immediately Amis began to weep, and said, I know that I have spoken to thee a terrible thing, but

constrained thereto; I pray thee cast me not away from the shelter of thy house. And Amile answered that what he had covenanted with him, that he would perform, unto the hour of his death: But I conjure thee, said he, by the faith which there is between me and thee, and by our comradeship, and by the baptism we received together at Rome, that thou tell me whether it was man or angel said that to thee. And Amis answered again, So truly as an angel hath spoken to me this night, so may God deliver me from my infirmity!

"Then Amile began to weep in secret, and thought within himself: If this man was ready to die before the king for me, shall I not for him slay my children? Shall I not keep faith with him who was faithful to me even unto death? And Amile tarried no longer, but departed to the chamber of his wife, and bade her go hear the Sacred Office. And he took a sword, and went to the bed where the children were lying, and found them asleep. And he lay down over them and began to weep bitterly and said, Hath any man yet heard of a father who of his own will slew his children? Alas, my children! I am no longer your father, but your cruel murderer.

"And the children awoke at the tears of their father, which fell upon them; and they looked up into his face and began to laugh. And as they were of the age of about three years, he said, Your laughing will be turned into tears, for your innocent blood must now be shed, and therewith he cut off their heads. Then he laid them back in the bed, and put the heads upon the bodies, and covered them as though they slept: and with the blood which he had taken he washed his comrade, and said, Lord Jesus Christ: who hast commanded men to keep faith on earth, and didst heal the leper by Thy word! cleanse now my comrade, for whose love I have shed the blood of my children.

"Then Amis was cleansed of his leprosy. And Amile clothed his companion in his best robes; and as they went to the church to give thanks, the bells, by the will of God, rang of their own accord. And when the people of the city heard that, they ran together to see the marvel. And the wife of Amile, when she saw Amis and Amile coming, asked which of the twain was her husband, and said, I know well the vesture of them both, but I know not which of them is Amile. And Amile said to her, I am Amile, and my companion is Amis, who is healed of his sickness. And she was full of wonder, and desired to know in what manner he was healed. Give thanks to our Lord, answered Amile, but trouble not thyself as to the manner of the healing.

"Now neither the father nor the mother had yet entered where the children were; but the father sighed heavily, because they were dead, and the mother asked for them, that they might rejoice together; but Amile said, DAME! let the children sleep. And it was already the hour

of Tierce. And going in alone to the children to weep over them, he found them at play in the bed; only, in the place of the sword-cuts about their throats was as it were a thread of crimson. And he took them in his arms and carried them to his wife and said, Rejoice greatly, for thy children whom I had slain by the commandment of the angel are alive, and by their blood is Amis healed."

There, as I said, is the strength of the old French story. For the Renaissance has not only the sweetness which it derives from the classical world, but also that curious strength of which there are great resources in the true middle age. And as I have illustrated the early strength of the Renaissance by the story of Amis and Amile, a story which comes from the North, in which a certain racy Teutonic flavour is perceptible, so I shall illustrate that other element, its early sweetness, a languid excess of sweetness even, by another story printed in the same volume of the *Bibliothèque Elzevirienne*, and of about the same date, a story which comes, characteristically, from the South, and connects itself with the literature of Provence.

The central love-poetry of Provence, the poetry of the *Tenson* and the *Aubade*, of Bernard de Ventadour and Pierre Vidal, is poetry for the few, for the elect and peculiar people of the kingdom of sentiment. But below this intenser poetry there was probably a wide range of literature, less serious and elevated, reaching, by lightness of form and comparative homeliness of interest, an audience which the concentrated passion of those higher lyrics left untouched. This literature has long since perished, or lives only in later French or Italian versions. One such version, the only representative of its species, M. Fauriel thought he detected in the story of *Aucassin and Nicolette*, written in the French of the latter half of the thirteenth century, and preserved in a unique manuscript, in the national library of Paris; and there were reasons which made him divine for it a still more ancient ancestry, traces in it of an Arabian origin, as in a leaf lost out of some early *Arabian Nights*.* The little book loses none of its interest through the criticism which finds in it only a traditional subject, handed on by one people to another; for after passing thus from hand to hand, its outline is still clear, its surface untarnished; and, like many other stories, books, literary and artistic conceptions of the middle age, it has come to have in this way a sort of personal history, almost as full

* Recently, *Aucassin and Nicolette* has been edited and translated into English, with much graceful scholarship, by Mr. F. W. Bourdillon. Still more recently we have had a translation—a poet's translation—from the ingenious and versatile pen of Mr. Andrew Lang. The reader should consult also the chapter on "The Out-door Poetry", in Vernon Lee's most interesting *Euphorion; being Studies of the Antique and Medieval in the Renaissance*, a work abounding in knowledge and insight on the subjects of which it treats. [W.P.]

of risk and adventure as that of its own heroes. The writer himself calls the piece a *cantefable*, a tale told in prose, but with its incidents and sentiment helped forward by songs, inserted at irregular intervals. In the junctions of the story itself there are signs of roughness and want of skill, which make one suspect that the prose was only put together to connect a series of songs—a series of songs so moving and attractive that people wished to heighten and dignify their effect by a regular framework or setting. Yet the songs themselves are of the simplest kind, not rhymed even, but only imperfectly assonant, stanzas of twenty or thirty lines apiece, all ending with a similar vowel sound. And there, as elsewhere in that early poetry, much of the interest lies in the spectacle of the formation of a new artistic sense. A novel art is arising, the music of rhymed poetry, and in the songs of Aucassin and Nicolette, which seem always on the point of passing into true rhyme, but which halt somehow, and can never quite take flight, you see people just growing aware of the elements of a new music in their possession, and anticipating how pleasant such music might become.

The piece was probably intended to be recited by a company of trained performers, many of whom, at least for the lesser parts, were probably children. The songs are introduced by the rubric, *Or se cante (ici on chante)*; and each division of prose by the rubric, *Or dient et content et fabloient (ici on conte)*. The musical notes of a portion of the songs have been preserved; and some of the details are so descriptive that they suggested to M. Fauriel the notion that the words had been accompanied throughout by dramatic action. That mixture of simplicity and refinement which he was surprised to find in a composition of the thirteenth century, is shown sometimes in the turn given to some passing expression or remark; thus, "the Count de Garins was old and frail, his time was over"—*Li quens Garins de Beaucaire estoit vix et frales; si avoit son tans trespasé*. And then, all is so realised! One sees the ancient forest, with its disused roads grown deep with grass, and the place where seven roads meet—*u a forkeut set cemin qui s'en vont par le païs*; we hear the light-hearted country people calling each other by their rustic names, and putting forward, as their spokesman, one among them who is more eloquent and ready than the rest—*li un qui plus fu enparlés des autres*; for the little book has its burlesque element also, so that one hears the faint, far-off laughter still. Rough as it is, the piece certainly possesses this high quality of poetry, that it aims at a purely artistic effect. Its subject is a great sorrow, yet it claims to be a thing of joy and refreshment, to be entertained not for its matter only, but chiefly for its manner; it is *cortois*, it tells us, *et bien assis*.

For the student of manners, and of the old French language and literature, it has much interest of a purely antiquarian order. To say of an ancient literary composition that it has an antiquarian interest, often means that it has no distinct æsthetic interest for the reader of to-day. Antiquarianism, by a purely historical effort, by putting its object in perspective, and setting the reader in a certain point of view, from which what gave pleasure to the past is pleasurable for him also, may often add greatly to the charm we receive from ancient literature. But the first condition of such aid must be a real, direct, æsthetic charm in the thing itself. Unless it has that charm, unless some purely artistic quality went to its original making, no merely antiquarian effort can ever give it an æsthetic value, or make it a proper subject of æsthetic criticism. This quality, wherever it exists, it is always pleasant to define, and discriminate from the sort of borrowed interest which an old play, or an old story, may very likely acquire through a true antiquarianism. The story of Aucassin and Nicolette has something of this quality. Aucassin, the only son of Count Garins of Beaucaire, is passionately in love with Nicolette, a beautiful girl of unknown parentage, bought of the Saracens, whom his father will not permit him to marry. The story turns on the adventures of these two lovers, until at the end of the piece their mutual fidelity is rewarded. These adventures are of the simplest sort, adventures which seem to be chosen for the happy occasion they afford of keeping the eye of the fancy, perhaps the outward eye, fixed on pleasant objects, a garden, a ruined tower, the little hut of flowers which Nicolette constructs in the forest whither she escapes from her enemies, as a token to Aucassin that she has passed that way. All the charm of the *pièce* is in its details, in a turn of peculiar lightness and grace given to the situations and traits of sentiment, especially in its quaint fragments of early French prose.

All through it one feels the influence of that faint air of overwrought delicacy, almost of wantonness, which was so strong a characteristic of the poetry of the Troubadours. The Troubadours themselves were often men of great rank; they wrote for an exclusive audience, people of much leisure and great refinement, and they came to value a type of personal beauty which has in it but little of the influence of the open air and sunshine. There is a languid Eastern deliciousness in the very scenery of the story, the full-blown roses, the chamber painted in some mysterious manner where Nicolette is imprisoned, the cool brown marble, the almost nameless colours, the odour of plucked grass and flowers. Nicolette herself well becomes this scenery, and is the best illustration of the quality I mean—the beautiful, weird foreign girl, whom the shepherds take for a fay, who has the knowledge

of simples, the healing and beautifying qualities of leaves and flowers, whose skilful touch heals Aucassin's sprained shoulder, so that he suddenly leaps from the ground; the mere sight of whose white flesh, as she passed the place where he lay, healed a pilgrim stricken with sore disease, so that he rose up, and returned to his own country. With this girl Aucassin is so deeply in love that he forgets all knightly duties. At last Nicolette is shut up to get her out of his way, and perhaps the prettiest passage in the whole piece is the fragment of prose which describes her escape.

"Aucassin was put in prison, as you have heard, and Nicolette remained shut up in her chamber. It was summer-time, in the month of May, when the days are warm and long and clear, and the nights coy and serene.

"One night Nicolette, lying on her bed, saw the moon shine clear through the little window, and heard the nightingale sing in the garden, and then came the memory of Aucassin, whom she so much loved. She thought of the Count Garins of Beaucaire, who mortally hated her, and, to be rid of her, might at any moment cause her to be burned or drowned. She perceived that the old woman who kept her company was asleep; she rose and put on the fairest gown she had; she took the bed-clothes and the towels, and knotted them together like a cord, as far as they would go. Then she tied the end to a pillar of the window, and let herself slip down quite softly into the garden, and passed straight across it, to reach the town.

"Her hair was yellow in small curls, her smiling eyes blue-green, her face clear and feat, the little lips very red, the teeth small and white; and the daisies which she crushed in passing, holding her skirt high behind and before, looked dark against her feet; the girl was so white!

"She came to the garden-gate and opened it, and walked through the streets of Beaucaire, keeping on the dark side of the way to be out of the light of the moon, which shone quietly in the sky. She walked as fast as she could, until she came to the tower where Aucassin was. The tower was set about with pillars, here and there. She pressed herself against one of the pillars, wrapped herself closely in her mantle, and putting her face to a chink of the tower, which was old and ruined, she heard Aucassin crying bitterly within, and when she had listened awhile she began to speak."

But scattered up and down through this lighter matter, always tinged with humour and often passing into burlesque, which makes up the general substance of the piece, there are morsels of a different

quality, touches of some intenser sentiment, coming it would seem from the profound and energetic spirit of the Provençal poetry itself, to which the inspiration of the book has been referred. Let me gather up these morsels of deeper colour, these expressions of the ideal intensity of love, the motive which really unites together the fragments of the little composition. Dante, the perfect flower of ideal love, has recorded how the tyranny of that "Lord of terrible aspect" became actually physical, blinding his senses, and suspending his bodily forces. In this, Dante is but the central expression and type of experiences known well enough to the initiated, in that passionate age. Aucassin represents this ideal intensity of passion—

*Aucassin, li biax, li blons,
Li gentix, li amorous;—*

the slim, tall, debonair *dansellon*, as the singers call him, with his curled yellow hair, and eyes of *vair*, who faints with love, as Dante fainted, who rides all day through the forest in search of Nicolette, while the thorns tear his flesh, so that one might have traced him by the blood upon the grass, and who weeps at eventide because he has not found her, who has the malady of his love, and neglects all knightly, duties. Once he is induced to put himself at the head of his people, that they, seeing him before them, might have more heart to defend themselves; then a song relates how the sweet, grave figure goes forth to battle, in dainty, tight-laced armour. It is the very image of the Provençal love-god, no longer a child, but grown to pensive youth, as Pierre Vidal met him, riding on a white horse, fair as the morning, his vestment embroidered with flowers. He rode on through the gates into the open plain beyond. But as he went, that great malady of his love came upon him. The bridle fell from his hands; and like one who sleeps walking, he was carried on into the midst of his enemies, and heard them talking together how they might most conveniently kill him.

One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart, in the middle age, which I have termed a medieval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time. In their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the Christian ideal; and their love became sometimes a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion. It was the return of that ancient Venus, not dead, but only hidden for a time in the caves of the Venusberg, of

those old pagan gods still going to and fro on the earth, under all sorts of disguises. And this element in the middle age, for the most part ignored by those writers who have treated it pre-eminently as the "Age of Faith"—this rebellious and antinomian element, the recognition of which has made the delineation of the middle age by the writers of the Romantic school in France, by Victor Hugo for instance in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, so suggestive and exciting—is found alike in the history of Abelard and the legend of Tannhäuser. More and more, as we come to mark changes and distinctions of temper in what is often in one all-embracing confusion called the middle age, that rebellion, that sinister claim for liberty of heart and thought, comes to the surface. The Albigensian movement, connected so strangely with the history of Provençal poetry, is deeply tinged with it. A touch of it makes the Franciscan order, with its poetry, its mysticism, its "illumination", from the point of view of religious authority, justly suspect. It influences the thoughts of those obscure prophetic writers, like Joachim of Flora, strange dreamers in a world of flowery rhetoric of that third and final dispensation of a "spirit of freedom", in which law shall have passed away. Of this spirit *Aucassin and Nicolette* contains perhaps the most famous expression: it is the answer Aucassin gives when he is threatened with the pains of hell, if he makes Nicolette his mistress. A creature wholly of affection and the senses, he sees on the way to paradise only a feeble and worn-out company of aged priests, "clinging day and night to the chapel altars", barefoot or in patched sandals. With or even without Nicolette, "his sweet mistress whom he so much loves", he, for his part, is ready to start on the way to hell, along with "the good scholars", as he says, and the actors, and the fine horsemen dead in battle, and the men of fashion,* and "the fair courteous ladies who had two or three chevaliers apiece beside their own true lords", all gay with music, in their gold, and silver, and beautiful furs—"the vair and the grey".

But in the *House Beautiful* the saints too have their place; and the student of the Renaissance has this advantage over the student of the emancipation of the human mind in the Reformation, or the French Revolution, that in tracing the footsteps of humanity to higher levels, he is not beset at every turn by the inflexibilities and antagonisms of some well-recognised controversy, with rigidly defined opposites, exhausting the intelligence and limiting one's sympathies. The opposition of the professional defenders of a mere system to that

* *Parage*, peerage:—which came to signify all that ambitious youth affected most on the outside of life, in that old world of the Troubadours, with whom this term is of frequent recurrence. [W.P.]

more sincere and generous play of the forces of human mind and character, which I have noted as the secret of Abelard's struggle, is indeed all powerful. But the incompatibility with one another of souls really "fair" is not essential; and within the enchanted region of the Renaissance, one needs not be for ever on one's guard. Here there are no fixed parties, no exclusions: all breathes of that unity of culture in which "whatsoever things are comely" are reconciled, for the elevation and adorning of our spirits. And just in proportion as those who took part in the Renaissance become centrally representative of it, just so much the more is this condition realised in them. The wicked popes, and the loveless tyrants, who from time to time became its patrons, or mere speculators in its fortunes, lend themselves easily to disputations, and, from this side or that, the spirit of controversy lays just hold upon them. But the painter of the *Last Supper*, with his kindred, lives in a land where controversy has no breathing-place. They refuse to be classified. In the story of *Aucassin and Nicolette*, in the literature which it represents, the note of defiance, of the opposition of one system to another, is sometimes harsh. Let me conclude then with a morsel from *Amis and Amile*, in which the harmony of human interests is still entire. For the story of the great traditional friendship, in which, as I said, the liberty of the heart makes itself felt, seems, as we have it, to have been written by a monk—*La vie des saints martyrs Amis et Amile*. It was not till the end of the seventeenth century that their names were finally excluded from the martyrology; and their story ends with this monkish miracle of earthly comradeship, more than faithful unto death:—

"For, as God had united them in their lives in one accord, so they were not divided in their death, falling together side by side, with a host of other brave men, in battle for King Charles at Mortara, so called from that great slaughter. And the bishops gave counsel to the king and queen that they should bury the dead, and build a church in that place; and their counsel pleased the king greatly. And there were built two churches, the one by commandment of the king in honour of Saint Oseige, and the other by commandment of the queen in honour of Saint Peter.

"And the king caused the two chests of stone to be brought in the which the bodies of Amis and Amile lay; and Amile was carried to the church of Saint Peter, and Amis to the church of Saint Oseige; and the other corpses were buried, some in one place and some in the other. But lo! next morning, the body of Amile in his coffin was found lying in the church of Saint Oseige, beside the coffin of Amis his comrade. Behold then this wondrous amity, which by death could not be dis severed!

“This miracle God did, who gave to His disciples power to remove mountains. And by reason of this miracle the king and queen remained in that place for a space of thirty days, and performed the offices of the dead who were slain, and honoured the said churches with great gifts. And the bishop ordained many clerks to serve in the church of Saint Oseige, and commanded them that they should guard duly, with great devotion, the bodies of the two companions, Amis and Amile.”

DENYS L'AUXERROIS

ALMOST every people, as we know, has had its legend of a "golden age" and of its return—legends which will hardly be forgotten, however prosaic the world may become, while man himself remains the aspiring, never quite contented being he is. And yet in truth, since we are no longer children, we might well question the advantage of the return to us of a condition of life in which, by the nature of the case, the values of things would, so to speak, lie wholly on their surfaces, unless we could regain also the childish consciousness, or rather unconsciousness, in ourselves, to take all that adroitly and with the appropriate lightness of heart. The dream, however, has been left for the most part in the usual vagueness of dreams: in their waking hours people have been too busy to furnish it forth with details. What follows is a quaint legend, with detail enough, of such a return of a golden or poetically-gilded age (a denizen of old Greece itself actually finding his way back again among men) as it happened in an ancient town of medieval France.

Of the French town, properly so called, in which the products of successive ages, not without lively touches of the present, are blended together harmoniously, with a beauty *specific*—a beauty cisalpine and northern, yet at the same time quite distinct from the massive German picturesque of Ulm, or Freiburg, or Augsburg, and of which Turner has found the ideal in certain of his studies of the rivers of France, a perfectly happy conjunction of river and town being of the essence of its physiognomy—the town of Auxerre is perhaps the most complete realisation to be found by the actual wanderer. Certainly, for picturesque expression it is the most memorable of a distinguished group of three in these parts,—Auxerre, Sens, Troyes,—each gathered, as if with deliberate aim at such effect, about the central mass of a huge grey cathedral.

Around Troyes the natural picturesque is to be sought only in the rich, almost coarse, summer colouring of the Champagne country, of which the very tiles, the plaster and brickwork of its tiny villages and great, straggling, village-like farms have caught the warmth. The cathedral, visible far and wide over the fields seemingly of loose wild-flowers, itself a rich mixture of all the varieties of the Pointed style down to the latest *Flamboyant*, may be noticed among the greater French churches for breadth of proportions internally, and is famous

for its almost unrivalled treasure of stained glass, chiefly of a florid, elaborate, later type, with much highly conscious artistic contrivance in design as well as in colour. In one of the richest of its windows, for instance, certain lines of pearly white run hither and thither, with delightful distant effect, upon ruby and dark blue. Approaching nearer you find it to be a 'Travellers' window, and those odd lines of white the long walking-staves in the hands of Abraham, Raphael, the Magi, and the other saintly patrons of journeys. The appropriate provincial character of the *bourgeoisie* of Champagne is still to be seen, it would appear, among the citizens of Troyes. Its streets, for the most part in timber and pargeting, present more than one unaltered specimen of the ancient *hôtel* or town-house, with forecourt and garden in the rear; and its more devout citizens would seem even in their church-building to have sought chiefly to please the eyes of those occupied with mundane affairs and out of doors, for they have finished, with abundant outlay, only the vast, useless portals of their parish churches, of surprising height and lightness, in a kind of wildly elegant Gothic-on-stilts, giving to the streets of Troyes a peculiar air of the grotesque, as if in some quaint nightmare of the Middle Age.

At Sens, thirty miles away to the west, a place of far graver aspect, the name of Jean Cousin denotes a more chastened temper, even in these sumptuous decorations. Here all is cool and composed, with an almost English austerity. The first growth of the Pointed style in England—the hard "early English" of Canterbury—is indeed the creation of William, a master reared in the architectural school of Sens; and the severity of his taste might seem to have acted as a restraining power on all the subsequent changes of manner in this place—changes in themselves for the most part towards luxuriance. In harmony with the atmosphere of its great church is the cleanly quiet of the town, kept fresh by little channels of clear water circulating through its streets, derivatives of the rapid Vanne which falls just below into the Yonne. The Yonne, bending gracefully, link after link, through a never-ending rustle of poplar trees, beneath lowly vine-clad hills, with relics of delicate woodland here and there, sometimes close at hand, sometimes leaving an interval of broad meadow, has all the lightsome characteristics of French river-side scenery on a smaller scale than usual, and might pass for the child's fancy of a river, like the rivers of the old miniature-painters, blue, and full to a fair green margin. One notices along its course a greater proportion than elsewhere of still untouched old seignorial residences, larger or smaller. The range of old gibbous towns along its banks, expanding their gay quays upon the water-side, have a common character—Joigny, Villeneuve, Saint Julien-du-Sault—yet tempt us to tarry at each and

examine its relics, old glass and the like, of the Renaissance or the Middle Age, for the acquisition of real though minor lessons on the various arts which have left themselves a central monument at Auxerre.—Auxerre! A slight ascent in the winding road! and you have before you the prettiest town in France—the broad framework of vineyard sloping upwards gently to the horizon, with distant white cottages inviting one to walk; the quiet curve of river below, with all the river-side details; the three great purple-tiled masses of Saint Germain, Saint Pierre, and the cathedral of Saint Étienne, rising out of the crowded houses with more than the usual abruptness and irregularity of French building. Here, that rare artist, the susceptible painter of architecture, if he understands the value alike of line and mass of broad masses and delicate lines, has “a subject made to his hand.”

A veritable country of the vine, it presents nevertheless an expression peaceful rather than radiant. Perfect type of that happy mean between northern earnestness and the luxury of the south, for which we prize midland France, its physiognomy is not quite happy—attractive in part for its melancholy. Its most characteristic atmosphere is to be seen when the tide of light and distant cloud is travelling quickly over it, when rain is not far off, and every touch of art or of time on its old building is defined in clear grey. A fine summer ripens its grapes into a valuable wine; but in spite of that it seems always longing for a larger and more continuous allowance of the sunshine which is so much to its taste. You might fancy something querulous or plaintive in that rustling movement of the vine-leaves, as blue-frocked Jacques Bonhomme finishes his day's labour among them.

To beguile one such afternoon when the rain set in early and walking was impossible, I found my way to the shop of an old dealer in *bric-à-brac*. It was not a monotonous display, after the manner of the Parisian dealer, of a stock-in-trade the like of which one has seen many times over, but a discriminate collection of real curiosities. One seemed to recognise a provincial school of taste in various relics of the housekeeping of the last century, with many a gem of earlier times from the old churches and religious houses of the neighbourhood. Among them was a large and brilliant fragment of stained glass which might have come from the cathedral itself. Of the very finest quality in colour and design, it presented a figure not exactly conformable to any recognised ecclesiastical type; and it was clearly part of a series. On my eager inquiry for the remainder, the old man replied that no more of it was known, but added that the priest of a neighbouring village was the possessor of an entire set of tapestries, apparently intended for suspension in church, and designed to portray

the whole subject of which the figure in the stained glass was a portion.

Next afternoon accordingly I repaired to the priest's house, in reality a little Gothic building, part perhaps of an ancient manor-house, close to the village church. In the front garden, flower-garden and *potager* in one, the bees were busy among the autumn growths—many-coloured asters, bignonias, scarlet-beans, and the old-fashioned parsonage flowers. The courteous owner readily showed me his tapestries, some of which hung on the walls of his parlour and staircase by way of a background for the display of the other curiosities of which he was a collector. Certainly, those tapestries and the stained glass dealt with the same theme. In both were the same musical instruments—pipes, cymbals, long reed-like trumpets. The story, indeed, included the building of an organ, just such an instrument, only on a larger scale, as was standing in the old priest's library, though almost soundless now, whereas in certain of the woven pictures the hearers appear as if transported, some of them shouting rapturously to the organ music. A sort of mad vehemence prevails, indeed, throughout the delicate bewilderments of the whole series—giddy dances, wild animals leaping, above all perpetual wreathings of the vine, connecting, like some mazy arabesque, the various presentations of one oft-repeated figure, translated here out of the clear-coloured glass into the sadder, somewhat opaque and earthen hues of the silken threads. The figure was that of the organ-builder himself, a flaxen and flowery creature, sometimes wellnigh naked among the vine-leaves, sometimes muffled in skins against the cold, sometimes in the dress of a monk, but always with a strong impress of real character and incident from the veritable streets of Auxerre. What is it? Certainly, notwithstanding its grace, and wealth of graceful accessories, a suffering, tortured figure. With all the regular beauty of a pagan god, he has suffered after a manner of which we must suppose pagan gods incapable. It was as if one of those fair, triumphant beings had cast in his lot with the creatures of an age later than his own, people of larger spiritual capacity and assuredly of a larger capacity for melancholy. With this fancy in my mind, by the help of certain notes, which lay in the priest's curious library, upon the history of the works at the cathedral during the period of its finishing, and in repeated examination of the old tapestried designs, the story shaped itself at last.

Towards the middle of the thirteenth century the cathedral of Saint Étienne was complete in its main outlines; what remained was the building of the great tower, and all that various labour of final decoration which it would take more than one generation to accomplish. Certain circumstances, however, not wholly explained, led to a some-

what rapid finishing, as it were out of hand, yet with a marvellous fulness at once and grace. Of the result much has perished, or been transferred elsewhere; a portion is still visible in sumptuous relics of stained windows, and, above all, in the reliefs which adorn the western portals, very delicately carved in a fine, firm stone from Tonnerre, of which time has only browned the surface, and which, for early mastery in art, may be compared with the contemporary work of Italy. They come nearer than the art of that age was used to do to the expression of life; with a feeling for reality, in no ignoble form, caught, it might seem, from the ardent and full-veined existence then current in these actual streets and houses. Just then Auxerre had its turn in that political movement which broke out sympathetically, first in one, then in another of the towns of France, turning their narrow, feudal institutions into a free, communistic life—a movement of which those great centres of popular devotion, the French cathedrals, are in many instances the monument. Closely connected always with the assertion of individual freedom, alike in mind and manners, at Auxerre this political stir was associated also, as cause or effect, with the figure and character of a particular personage, long remembered. He was the very genius, it would appear, of that new, free, generous manner in art, active and potent as a living creature.

As the most skilful of the band of carvers worked there one day, with a labour he could never quite make equal to the vision within him, a fine-sculptured Greek coffin of stone, which had been made to serve for some later Roman funeral, was unearthed by the masons. Here, it might seem, the thing was indeed done, and art achieved, as far as regards those final graces, and harmonies of execution, which were precisely what lay beyond the hand of the medieval workman, who for his part had largely at command a seriousness of conception lacking in the old Greek. Within the coffin lay an object of a fresh and brilliant clearness among the ashes of the dead—a flask of lively green glass, like a great emerald. It might have been “the wondrous vessel of the Grail”. Only, this object seemed to bring back no ineffable purity, but rather the riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself. Coated within, and, as some were persuaded, still redolent with the tawny sediment of the Roman wine it had held so long ago, it was set aside for use at the supper which was shortly to celebrate the completion of the masons’ work. Amid much talk of the great age of gold, and some random expressions of hope that it might return again, fine old wine of Auxerre was sipped in small glasses from the precious flask as supper ended. And, whether or not the opening of the buried vessel had anything to do with it, from that time a sort of golden age seemed indeed to be reigning there for a while, and

the triumphant completion of the great church was contemporary with a series of remarkable wine seasons. The vintage of those years was long remembered. Fine and abundant wine was to be found stored up even in poor men's cottages; while a new beauty, a gaiety, was abroad, as all the conjoint arts branched out exuberantly in a reign of quiet, delighted labour, at the prompting, as it seemed, of the singular being who came suddenly and oddly to Auxerre to be the centre of so pleasant a period, though in truth he made but a sad ending.

A peculiar usage long perpetuated itself at Auxerre. On Easter Day the canons, in the very centre of the great church, played solemnly at ball. Vespers being sung, instead of conducting the bishop to his palace, they proceeded in order into the nave, the people standing in two long rows to watch. Girding up their skirts a little way, the whole body of clerics awaited their turn in silence, while the captain of the singing-boys cast the ball into the air, as high as he might, along the vaulted roof of the central aisle to be caught by any boy who could, and tossed again with hand or foot till it passed on to the portly chanters, the chaplains, the canons themselves, who finally played out the game with all the decorum of an ecclesiastical ceremony. It was just then, just as the canons took the ball to themselves so gravely, that Denys—Denys l'Auxerrois, as he was afterwards called—appeared for the first time. Leaping in among the timid children, he made the thing really a game. The boys played like boys, the men almost like madmen, and all with a delightful glee which became contagious, first in the clerical body, and then among the spectators. The aged Dean of the Chapter, Protonotary of his Holiness, held up his purple skirt a little higher, and stepping from the ranks with an amazing levity, as if suddenly relieved of his burden of eighty years, tossed the ball with his foot to the venerable capitular Homilist, equal to the occasion. And then, unable to stand inactive any longer, the laity carried on the game among themselves, with shouts of not too boisterous amusement; the sport continuing till the flight of the ball could no longer be traced along the dusky aisles.

Though the home of his childhood was but a humble one—one of those little cliff-houses cut out in the low chalky hillside, such as are still to be found with inhabitants in certain districts of France—there were some who connected his birth with the story of a beautiful country girl, who, about eighteen years before had been taken from her own people, not unwillingly, for the pleasure of the Count of Auxerre. She had wished indeed to see the great lord, who had sought her privately, in the glory of his own house; but, terrified by the strange splendours of her new abode and manner of life, and the

anger of the true wife, she had fled suddenly from the place during the confusion of a violent storm, and in her flight given birth prematurely to a child. The child, a singularly fair one, was found alive, but the mother dead, by lightning-stroke as it seemed, not far from her lord's chamber-door, under the shelter of a ruined ivy-clad tower. Denys himself certainly was a joyous lad enough. At the cliff-side cottage, nestling actually beneath the vineyards, he came to be an unrivalled gardener, and, grown to manhood, brought his produce to market, keeping a stall in the great cathedral square for the sale of melons and pomegranates, all manner of seeds and flowers, (*omnia speciosa camporum*,) honey also, wax tapers, sweetmeats hot from the frying-pan, rough home-made pots and pans from the little pottery in the wood, loaves baked by the aged woman in whose house he lived. On that Easter Day he had entered the great church for the first time, for the purpose of seeing the game.

And from the very first, the women who saw him at his business, or watering his plants in the cool of the evening, idled for him. The men who noticed the crowd of women at his stall, and how even fresh young girls from the country, seeing him for the first time, always loitered there, suspected—who could tell what kind of powers? hidden under the white veil of that youthful form; and pausing to ponder the matter, found themselves also fallen into the snare. The sight of him made old people feel young again. Even the sage monk Hermes, devoted to study and experiment, was unable to keep the fruit-seller out of his mind, and would fain have discovered the secret of his charm, partly for the friendly purpose of explaining to the lad himself his perhaps more than natural gifts with a view to their profitable cultivation.

It was a period, as older men took note, of young men and their influence. They took fire, no one could quite explain how, as if at his presence, and asserted a wonderful amount of volition, of insolence, yet as if with the consent of their elders, who would themselves sometimes lose their balance, a little comically. That revolution in the temper and manner of individuals concurred with the movement then on foot at Auxerre, as in other French towns, for the liberation of the *commune* from its old feudal superiors. Denys they called *Frank*, among many other nicknames. Young lords prided themselves on saying that labour should have its ease, and were almost prepared to take freedom, plebeian freedom (of course duly decorated, at least with wild-flowers) for a bride. For in truth Denys at his stall was turning the grave, slow movement of politic heads into a wild social license, which for a while made life like a stage-play. He first led those long processions, through which by and by "the little people", the

discontented, the despairing, would utter their minds. One man engaged with another in talk in the market-place; a new influence came forth at the contact; another and then another adhered; at last a new spirit was abroad everywhere. The hot nights were noisy with swarming troops of dishevelled women and youths with red-stained limbs and faces, carrying their lighted torches over the vine-clad hills, or rushing down the streets, to the horror of timid watchers, towards the cool spaces by the river. A shrill music, a laughter at all things, was everywhere. And the new spirit repaired even to church to take part in the novel offices of the Feast of Fools. Heads flung back in ecstasy—the morning sleep among the vines, when the fatigue of the night was over—dew-drenched garments—the serf lying at his ease at last: the artists, then so numerous at the place, caught what they could, something, at least, of the richness, the flexibility of the visible aspects of life, from all this. With them the life of seeming idleness, to which Denys was conducting the youth of Auxerre so pleasantly, counted but as the cultivation, for their due service to man, of delightful natural things. And the powers of nature concurred. It seemed there would be winter no more. The planet Mars drew nearer to the earth than usual, hanging in the low sky like a fiery red lamp. A massive but wellnigh lifeless vine on the wall of the cloister, allowed to remain there only as a curiosity on account of its immense age, in that *great* season, as it was long after called, clothed itself with fruit once more. The culture of the grape greatly increased. The sunlight fell for the first time on many a spot of deep woodland cleared for vine-growing; though Denys, a lover of trees, was careful to leave a stately specimen of forest growth here and there.

When his troubles came, one characteristic that had seemed most amiable in his prosperity was turned against him—a fondness for oddly grown or even misshapen, yet potentially happy, children; for odd animals also: he sympathised with them all, was skilful in healing their maladies, saved the hare in the chase, and sold his mantle to redeem a lamb from the butcher. He taught the people not to be afraid of the strange, ugly creatures which the light of the moving torches drew from their hiding-places, nor think it a bad omen that they approached. He tamed a veritable wolf to keep him company like a dog. It was the first of many ambiguous circumstances about him, from which, in the minds of an increasing number of people, a deep suspicion and hatred began to define itself. The rich *bestiary*, then compiling in the library of the great church, became, through his assistance, nothing less than a garden of Eden—the garden of Eden grown wild. The owl alone he abhorred. A little later, almost as if in revenge, alone of all animals it clung to him, haunting him persistently

among the dusky stone towers, when grown gentler than ever he dared not kill it. He moved unhurt in the famous *ménagerie* of the castle, of which the common people were so much afraid, and let out the lions, themselves timid prisoners enough, through the streets during the fair. The incident suggested to the somewhat barren penmen of the day a "morality" adapted from the old pagan books—a stage-play in which the God of Wine should return in triumph from the East. In the cathedral square the pageant was presented, amid an intolerable noise of every kind of pipe-music, with Denys in the chief part, upon a gaily-painted chariot, in soft silken raiment, and, for headdress, a strange elephant-scalp with gilded tusks.

And that unrivalled fairness and freshness of aspect:—how did he alone preserve it untouched, through the wind and heat? In truth, it was not by magic, as some said, but by a natural simplicity in his living. When that dark season of his troubles arrived he was heard begging querulously one wintry night, "Give me wine, meat; dark wine and brown meat!"—come back to the rude door of his old home in the cliff-side. Till that time the great vine-dresser himself drank only water; he had lived on spring-water and fruit. A lover of fertility in all its forms, in what did but suggest it, he was curious and penetrative concerning the habits of water, and had the secret of the divining-rod. Long before it came he could detect the scent of rain from afar, and would climb with delight to the great scaffolding on the unfinished tower to watch its coming over the thirsty vine-land, till it rattled on the great tiled roof of the church below; and then, throwing off his mantle, allow it to bathe his limbs freely, clinging firmly against the tempestuous wind among the carved imageries of dark stone.

It was on his sudden return after a long journey, (one of many inexplicable disappearances,) coming back changed somewhat, that he ate flesh for the first time, tearing the hot, red morsels with his delicate fingers in a kind of wild greed. He had fled to the south from the first forbidding days of a hard winter which came at last. At the great seaport of Marseilles he had trafficked with sailors from all parts of the world, from Arabia and India, and bought their wares, exposed now for sale, to the wonder of all, at the Easter fair—richer wines and incense than had been known in Auxerre, seeds of marvellous new flowers, creatures wild and tame, new pottery painted in raw gaudy tints, the skins of animals, meats fried with unheard-of condiments. His stall formed a strange, unwonted patch of colour, found suddenly displayed in the hot morning.

The artists were more delighted than ever, and frequented his company in the little manorial habitation, deserted long since by its

owners and haunted, so that the eyes of many looked evil upon it, where he had taken up his abode, attracted, in the first instance, by its rich though neglected garden, a tangle of every kind of creeping, vine-like plant. Here, surrounded in abundance by the pleasant materials of his trade, the vine-dresser as it were turned pedant and kept school for the various artists, who learned here an art supplementary to their own,—that gay magic, namely (art or trick) of his existence, till they found themselves grown into a kind of aristocracy, like veritable *gens fleur-de-lisés*, as they worked together for the decoration of the great church and a hundred other places beside. And yet a darkness had grown upon him. The kind creature had lost something of his gentleness. Strange motiveless misdeeds had happened; and, at a loss for other causes, not the envious only would fain have traced the blame to Denys. He was making the younger world mad. Would he make himself Count of Auxerre? The lady Ariane, deserted by her former lover, had looked kindly upon him; was ready to make him son-in-law to the old count her father; old and not long for this world. The wise monk Hermes bethought him of certain old readings in which the Wine-god, whose part Denys had played so well, had his contrast, his dark or antipathetic side; was like a double creature, of two natures, difficult or impossible to harmonise. And in truth the much-prized wine of Auxerre has itself but a fugitive charm, being apt to sicken and turn gross long before the bottle is empty, however carefully sealed; as it goes indeed, at its best, by hard names, among those who grow it, such as *Chainette* and *Migraine*.

A kind of degeneration, of coarseness—the coarseness of satiety, and shapeless, battered-out appetite—with an almost savage taste for carnivorous diet, had come over the company. A rumour went abroad of certain women who had drowned, in mere wantonness, their new-born babes. A girl with child was found hanged by her own act in a dark cellar. Ah! if Denys also had not felt himself mad! But when the guilt of a murder, committed with a great vine-axe far out among the vineyards, was attributed vaguely to him, he could but wonder whether it had been indeed thus, and the shadow of a fancied crime abode with him. People turned against their favourite, whose former charms must now be counted only as the fascinations of witchcraft. It was as if the wine poured out for them had soured in the cup. The golden age had indeed come back for a while:—golden was it, or gilded only, after all? and they were too sick, or at least too serious, to carry through their parts in it. The monk Hermes was whimsically reminded of that *after-thought* in pagan poetry, of a Wine-god who had been in hell. Denys certainly, with all his flaxen fairness about him, was manifestly a sufferer. At first he thought of departing

secretly to some other place. Alas! his wits were too far gone for certainty of success in the attempt. He feared to be brought back a prisoner. Those fat years were over. It was a time of scarcity. The working people might not eat and drink of the good things they had helped to store away. Tears rose in the eyes of needy children, of old or weak people like children, as they woke up again and again to sunless, frost-bound, ruinous mornings; and the little hungry creatures went prowling after scattered hedge-nuts or dried vine-tendrils. Mysterious, dark rains prevailed throughout the summer. The great offices of Saint John were fumbled through in a sudden darkness of unseasonable storm, which greatly damaged the carved ornaments of the church, the bishop reading his midday Mass by the light of the little candle at his book. And then, one night, the night which seemed literally to have swallowed up the shortest day in the year, a plot was contrived by certain persons to take Denys as he went and kill him privately for a sorcerer. He could hardly tell how he escaped, and found himself safe in his earliest home, the cottage in the cliff-side, with such a big fire as he delighted in burning upon the hearth. They made a little feast as well as they could for the beautiful hunted creature, with abundance of waxlights.

And at last the clergy bethought themselves of a remedy for this evil time. The body of one of the patron saints had lain neglected somewhere under the flagstones of the sanctuary. This must be piously exhumed, and provided with a shrine worthy of it. The goldsmiths, the jewellers and lapidaries, set diligently to work, and no long time after, the shrine, like a little cathedral with portals and tower complete, stood ready, its chiselled gold framing panels of rock crystal, on the great altar. Many bishops arrived, with King Lewis the Saint himself accompanied by his mother, to assist at the search for and disinterment of the sacred relics. In their presence, the Bishop of Auxerre, with vestments of deep red in honour of the relics, blessed the new shrine, according to the office *De benedictione capsarum pro reliquiis*. The pavement of the choir, removed amid a surging sea of lugubrious chants, all persons fasting, discovered as if it had been a battlefield of mouldering human remains. Their odour rose plainly above the plentiful clouds of incense, such as was used in the king's private chapel. The search for the Saint himself continued in vain all day and far into the night. At last from a little narrow chest, into which the remains had been almost crushed together, the bishop's red-gloved hands drew the dwindled body, shrunk in inconceivably, but still with every feature of the face traceable in a sudden oblique ray of ghastly dawn.

That shocking sight, after a sharp fit as though a demon were going

out of him, as he rolled on the turf of the cloister to which he had fled alone from the suffocating church, where the crowd still awaited the Procession of the relics and the Mass *De reliquiis quæ continentur in Ecclesiis*, seemed indeed to have cured the madness of Denys, but certainly did not restore his gaiety. He was left a subdued, silent, melancholy creature. Turning now, with an odd revulsion of feeling, to gloomy objects, he picked out a ghastly shred from the common bones on the pavement to wear about his neck, and in a little while found his way to the monks of Saint Germain, who gladly received him into their workshop, though secretly, in fear of his foes.

The busy tribe of variously gifted artists, labouring rapidly at the many works on hand for the final embellishment of the cathedral of St. Étienne, made those conventual buildings just then cheerful enough to lighten a melancholy, heavy even as that of our friend Denys. He took his place among the workmen, a conventual novice; a novice also as to whatever concerns any actual handicraft. He could but compound sweet incense for the sanctuary. And yet, again by merely visible presence, he made himself felt in all the varied exercise around him of those arts which address themselves first of all to sight. Unconsciously he defined a peculiar manner, alike of feeling and expression, to those skilful hands at work day by day with the chisel, the pencil, or the needle, in many an enduring form of exquisite fancy. In three successive phases or fashions might be traced, especially in the carved work, the humours he had determined. There was first wild gaiety, exuberant in a wreathing of life-like imageries, from which nothing really present in nature was excluded. That, as the soul of Denys darkened, had passed into obscure regions of the satiric, the grotesque and coarse. But from this time there was manifest, with no loss of power or effect, a well-assured seriousness, somewhat jealous and exclusive, not so much in the selection of the material on which the arts were to work, as in the precise sort of expression that should be induced upon it. It was as if the gay old pagan world had been *blessed* in some way; with effects to be seen most clearly in the rich miniature work of the manuscripts of the capitular library,—a marvellous Ovid especially, upon the pages of which those old loves and sorrows seemed to come to life again in medieval costume, as Denys, in cowl now and with tonsured head, leaned over the painter, and led his work, by a kind of visible sympathy, often unspoken, rather than by any formal comment.

Above all, there was a desire abroad to attain the instruments of a freer and more various sacred music than had been in use hitherto—a music that might express the whole compass of souls now grown to manhood. Auxerre, indeed, then as afterwards, was famous for its

liturgical music. It was Denys, at last, to whom the thought occurred of combining in a fuller tide of music all the instruments then in use. Like the Wine-god of old, he had been a lover and patron especially of the music of the pipe, in all its varieties. Here, too, there had been evident those three fashions or "modes":—first, the simple and pastoral, the homely note of the pipe, like the piping of the wind itself from off the distant fields; then, the wild, savage din that had cost so much to quiet people, and driven excitable people mad. Now he would compose all this to sweeter purposes; and the building of the first organ became like the book of his life: it expanded to the full compass of his nature, in its sorrow and delight. In long, enjoyable days of wind and sun by the riverside, the seemingly half-witted "brother" sought and found the needful varieties of reed. The carpenters, under his instruction, set up the great wooden passages for the thunder; while the little pipes of pasteboard simulated the sound of the human voice singing to the victorious notes of the long metal trumpets. At times this also, as people heard night after night those wandering sounds, seemed like the work of a madman, though they awoke sometimes in wonder at snatches of a new, an unmis-takable new music. It was the triumph of all the various modes of the power of the pipe, tamed, ruled, united. Only, on the painted shutters of the organ-case Apollo with his lyre in his hand, as lord of the strings, seemed to look askance on the music of the reed, in all the jealousy with which he put Marsyas to death so cruelly.

Meantime, the people, even his enemies, seemed to have forgotten him. Enemies, in truth, they still were, ready to take his life should the opportunity come; as he perceived when at last he ventured forth on a day of public ceremony. The bishop was to pronounce a blessing upon the foundations of a new bridge, designed to take the place of the ancient Roman bridge which, repaired in a thousand places, had hitherto served for the chief passage of the Yonne. It was as if the disturbing of that time-worn masonry let out the dark spectres of departed times. Deep down, at the core of the central pile, a painful object was exposed—the skeleton of a child, placed there alive, it was rightly surmised, in the superstitious belief that, by way of vicarious substitution, its death would secure the safety of all who should pass over. There were some who found themselves, with a little surprise, looking round as if for a similar pledge of security in their new under-taking. It was just then that Denys was seen plainly, standing, in all essential features precisely as of old, upon one of the great stones prepared for the foundation of the new building. For a moment he felt the eyes of the people upon him full of that strange humour, and with characteristic alertness, after a rapid gaze over the grey city

in its broad green framework of vineyards, best seen from this spot, flung himself down into the water and disappeared from view where the stream flowed most swiftly below a row of flour-mills. Some indeed fancied they had seen him emerge again safely on the deck of one of the great boats, loaded with grapes and wreathed triumphantly with flowers like a floating garden, which were then bringing down the vintage from the country; but generally the people believed their strange enemy now at last departed for ever. Denys in truth was at work again in peace at the cloister, upon his house of reeds and pipes. At time his fits came upon him again; and when they came, for his cure he would dig eagerly, turned sexton now, digging, by choice, graves for the dead in the various churchyards of the town. There were those who had seen him thus employed (that form seeming still to carry something of real sun-gold upon it) peering into the darkness, while his tears fell sometimes among the grim relics his mattock had disturbed.

In fact, from the day of the exhumation of the body of the Saint in the great church, he had had a wonderful curiosity for such objects, and one wintry day bethought him of removing the body of his mother from the unconsecrated ground in which it lay, that he might bury it in the cloister, near the spot where he was now used to work. At twilight he came over the frozen snow. As he passed through the stony barriers of the place the world around seemed curdled to the centre—all but himself, fighting his way across it, turning now and then right-about from the persistent wind, which dealt so roughly with his blond hair and the purple mantle whirled about him. The bones, hastily gathered, he placed, awefully but without ceremony, in a hollow space prepared secretly within the grave of another.

Meantime the winds of his organ were ready to blow; and with difficulty he obtained grace from the Chapter for a trial of its powers on a notable public occasion, as follows. A singular guest was expected at Auxerre. In recompense for some service rendered to the Chapter in times gone by, the Sire de Chastellux had the hereditary dignity of a canon of the church. On the day of his reception he presented himself at the entrance of the choir in surplice and amice, worn over the military habit. The old count of Chastellux was lately dead, and the heir had announced his coming, according to custom, to claim his ecclesiastical privilege. There had been long feud between the houses of Chastellux and Auxerre; but on this happy occasion an offer of peace came with a proposal for the hand of the Lady Ariane.

The goodly young man arrived, and, duly arrayed, was received into his stall at vespers, the bishop assisting. It was then that the people heard the music of the organ, rolling over them for the first

time, with various feelings of delight. But the performer on and author of the instrument was forgotten in his work, and there was no re-instatement of the former favourite. The religious ceremony was followed by a civic festival, in which Auxerre welcomed its future lord. The festival was to end at nightfall with a somewhat rude popular pageant, in which the person of Winter would be hunted blindfold through the streets. It was the sequel to that earlier stage-play of the *Return from the East* in which Denys had been the central figure. The old forgotten player saw his part before him, and, as if mechanically, fell again into the chief place, monk's dress and all. It might restore his popularity: who could tell? Hastily he donned the ashen-grey mantle, the rough haircloth about the throat, and went through the preliminary matter. And it happened that a point of the haircloth scratched his lip deeply, with a long trickling of blood upon the chin. It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage, and suddenly revealed to them the truth. The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions. The soul of Denys was already at rest, as his body, now borne along in front of the crowd, was tossed hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb. The men stuck little shreds of his flesh, or, failing that, of his torn raiment, into their caps; the women lending their long hairpins for the purpose. The monk Hermes sought in vain next day for any remains of the body of his friend. Only, at nightfall, the heart of Denys was brought to him by a stranger, still entire. It must long since have mouldered into dust under the stone, marked with a cross, where he buried it in a dark corner of the cathedral aisle.

So the figure in the stained glass explained itself. To me, Denys seemed to have been a real resident at Auxerre. On days of a certain atmosphere, when the trace of the Middle Age comes out, like old marks in the stones in rainy weather, I seemed actually to have seen the tortured figure there—to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets.

SUSPENDED JUDGMENT

THE diversity, the undulancy, of human nature!—so deep a sense of it went with Montaigne always that himself too seemed to be ever changing colour sympathetically therewith. Those innumerable differences, mental and physical, of which men had always been aware, on which they had so largely fed their vanity, were ultimate. That the surface of humanity presented an infinite variety was the tritest of facts. Pursue that variety below the surface!—the lines did but part further and further asunder, with an ever increasing divergency, which made any common measure of truth impossible. Diversity of custom!—What was it but diversity in the moral and mental view, diversity of opinion? and diversity of opinion, what but radical diversity of mental constitution? How various in kind and degree had he found men's thoughts concerning death, for instance, "some (ah me!) even running headlong upon it, with a real affection"? Death life; wealth, poverty; the whole sum of contrasts; nay! duty itself, "the relish of right and wrong"; all depend upon the opinion each one has of them, and "receive no colour of good or evil but according to the application of the individual soul." Did Hamlet learn of him that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so"?—"What we call evil is not so of itself: it depends only upon us, to give it another taste and complexion.—Things, in respect of themselves, have peradventure their weight, measure, and conditions; but when once we have taken them into us, the soul forms them as she pleases.—Death is terrible to Cicero, courted by Cato, indifferent to Socrates.—Fortune, circumstance, offers but the matter: 'tis the soul adds the form.—Every opinion, how fantastic soever to some, is to another of force enough to be espoused at the risk of life."

For opinion was the projection of individual *will*, of a native original predilection. Opinions!—they are like the clothes we wear, which warm us, not with their heat, but with ours. Track your way (as he had learned to do) to the remote origin of what looks like folly; at home, on its native soil, it was found to be justifiable, as a proper growth of wisdom. In the vast conflict of taste, preference, conviction, there was no real inconsistency. It was but that the soul looked "upon things with another eye, and represented them to itself with another kind of face; reason being a tincture almost equally infused into all our manners and opinions; though there never were in the

world two opinions exactly alike." And the practical comment was, not as one might have expected, towards the determination of some common standard of truth amid that infinite variety, but to this effect rather, that we are not bound to receive every opinion we are not able to refute, nor to accept another's refutation of our own; these diversities being themselves ultimate, and the priceless pearl of truth lying, if anywhere, not in large theoretic apprehension of the general, but in minute vision of the particular; in the perception of the concrete phenomenon, at this particular moment, and from this unique point of view—that for you, this for me—now, but perhaps not then.

Now; and not then! For if men are so diverse, not less disparate are the many men who keep discordant company within each one of us, "every man carrying in him the entire form of human condition". "That we taste nothing pure": the variancy of the individual in regard to himself: the complexity of soul which there, too, makes "all judgments in the gross" impossible or useless, certainly inequitable, he delighted to note. Men's minds were like the grotesques which some artists of that day loved to joint together, or like one of his own inconstant essays, never true for a page to its proposed subject. "Nothing is so supple as our understanding: it is double and diverse; and the matters are double and diverse, too."

Here, as it seemed to Gaston, was one for whom exceptions had taken the place of law: the very genius of qualification followed him through all his keen, constant, changeful consideration of men and things. How many curious moral variations he had to show!—"vices that are lawful": vices in us which "help to make up the seam in our piecing, as poisons are useful for the conservation of health": "actions good and excusable that are not lawful in themselves": "the soul discharging her passions upon false objects where the true are wanting": men doing more than they propose, or they hardly know what, at immense hazard, or pushed to do well by vice itself, or working for their enemies: "condemnations more criminal than the crimes they condemn": the excuses that are self-accusations: instances, from his own experience, of a hasty confidence in other men's virtue which "God had favoured": and how, "even to the worst people, it is sweet, their end once gained by a vicious act, to foist into it some show of justice." In the presence of this indefatigable analyst of act and motive all fixed outlines seemed to vanish away. The healthful pleasure of motion, of thoughts in motion!—Yes! Gaston felt them, the oldest of them, moving, as he listened, under and away from his feet, as if with the ground he stood on. And this was the vein of thought which oftenest led the master back contemptuously to emphasise the littleness of man.—"I think we can never be despised according to our full desert."

By way of counterpoise, there were admirable surprises in man. That cross-play of human tendencies determined from time to time in the forces of unique and irresistible character, "moving all together", pushing the world around it to phenomenal good or evil. For such as "make it their business to oversee human actions, it seems impossible they should proceed from one and the same person." Consolidation of qualities supposed, this did but make character, already the most attractive, because the most dynamic, phenomenon of experience, more interesting still. So tranquil a spectator of so average a world, a too critical minimiser, it might seem, of all that pretends to be of importance, Montaigne was constantly, gratefully, announcing his contact, in life, in books, with undeniable power and greatness, with forces full of beauty in their vigour, like lightning, the sea, the torrents:—overpowering desire augmented, yet victorious, by its very difficulty; the bewildering constancy of martyrs; single-hearted virtue not to be resolved into anything less surprising than itself; the devotion of that famed, so companionable, wife, dying cheerfully by her own act along with the sick husband "who could do no better than kill himself"; the grief, the joy, of which men suddenly die; the unconscious Stoicism of the poor; that stern self-control with which Jacques Bonhomme goes as usual to his daily labour with a heart tragic for the dead child at home; nay! even the boldness and strength of "those citizens who sacrifice honour and conscience, as others of old sacrificed their lives, for the good of their country." So carefully equable, his mind nevertheless was stored with, and delighted in, incidents, personalities, of barbarous strength—Esau, in all his phases—the very rudest children of "our great and powerful mother, nature." As Plato had said, "'twas to no purpose for a sober-minded man to knock at the door of poesy", or, if truth were spoken, of any other high matter of doing or making. That was consistent with his sympathetic belief in the capability of mere impetuous youth as such. Even those unexpected traits in ordinary people which seem to hint at larger laws and deeper forces of character, disconcerting any narrow judgment upon them, he welcomed as akin to his own indolent, but suddenly kindling, nature:—the mere self-will of men, the shrewd wisdom of an unlettered old woman, the fount of goodness in a cold or malicious heart. "I hear every day fools say things far from foolish." Those invincible prepossessions of humanity, or of the individual, which Bacon reckoned "idols of the cave", are no offence to him; are direct informations, it may be, beyond price, from a kindly spirit of truth in things.

For him there had been two grand surprises, two pre-eminent manifestations of the power and charm of man, not to be explained away,—one, within the compass of general and public observation;

the other, a matter of special intimacy to himself. There had been the greatness of the old Greek and Roman life, so greatly recorded: there had been the wisdom and kindness of Étienne de la Boetie, as made known in all their fulness to him alone. That his ardent devotion to the ancients had been rewarded with minute knowledge concerning them, was the privilege of the age in which he was born, late in the Revival of Letters. But the classical reading, which with others was often but an affectation, seducing them from the highest to a lower degree of reality, from men and women to their mere shadows in old books, had been for him nothing less than personal contact. "The qualities and fortunes" of the old Romans, especially, their wonderful straight ways through the world, the straight passage of their armies upon them, the splendour of their armour, of their entire external presence and show, their "riches and embellishments", above all, "the suddenness of Augustus", in that grander age for which *decision* was justifiable because really possible, had ever been "more in his head than the fortunes of his own country". If "we have no hold even on things present but by imagination", as he loved to observe,—then, how much more potent, steadier, larger, the imaginative substance of the world of Alexander and Socrates, of Virgil and Cæsar, than that of an age, which seemed to him, living in the midst of it, respectable mainly by its docility, by an imitation of the ancients which after all left untouched the real sources of their greatness. They had been indeed great, at the least dramatically, redeemed in part by magnificent courage and tact, in their very sins. "Our force is no more able to reach them in their vicious than in their virtuous qualities; for both the one and the other proceed from a vigour of soul which was without comparison greater in them than in us."

And yet, thinking of his friendship with the "incomparable Étienne de la Boetie, so perfect, inviolate, and entire, that the like is hardly to be found in story", he had to confess that the sources of greatness must still be quick in the world. That had remained with him as his one fixed standard of value in the estimate of men and things. On this single point, antiquity itself has been surpassed; the discourses it had left upon friendship seeming to him "poor and flat in comparison of the sense he had of it." For once, his sleepless habit of analysis had been checked by the inexplicable, the absolute; amid his jealously guarded indifference of soul he had been summoned to yield, and had yielded, to the magnetic power of another. "We were halves throughout, so that methinks by outliving him I defraud him of his part. I was so grown to be always his double in all things that methinks I am no more than half of myself. There is no action or thought of mine wherein I do not miss him, as I know that he would have missed me."

Tender but heroic, impulsive yet so wise, he might have done what the survivor (so it seemed to himself) was but vainly trying to do. It was worth his while to become famous, if that hapless memory might but be embalmed in one's fame. It had been better than love,—that friendship! to the building of which so much "concurrence" had been requisite, that "'twas much if fortune brought the like to pass once in three ages." Actually, we may think, the "sweet society" of those four years, in comparison with which the rest of his so pleasant life "was but smoke", had touched Montaigne's nature with refinements it might otherwise have lacked. He would have wished "to speak concerning it, to those who had experience" of what he said, could such have been found. In despair of that, he loved to discourse of it to all comers,—how it had come about, the circumstances of its sudden and wonderful growth. Yet after all were he pressed to say why he had so loved Étienne de la Boetie, he could but answer, "Because it was He! Because it was Il!"

And the surprises there are in man, his complexity, his variancy, were symptomatic of the changefulness, the confusion, the surprises, of the earth under one's feet, on the whole material world. The irregular, the unforeseen, the inconsecutive, miracle, accident, he noted lovingly: it had a philosophic import. It was habit rather than knowledge of them that took away the strangeness of the things actually about one. How many unlikely matters there were, testified by persons worthy of faith, "which, if we cannot persuade ourselves to believe, we ought at least to leave in suspense.—Though all that had arrived by report of past time should be true, it would be less than nothing in comparison of what is unknown."

On all sides we are beset by the incalculable:—walled up suddenly, as if by malign trickery, in the open field, or pushed forward senselessly, by the crowd around us, to good-fortune. In art, as in poetry, there are the "transports" which lift the artist out of, as they are not of, himself; for orators also, "those extraordinary motions which sometimes carry them above their design". Himself, "in the necessity and heat of combat", had sometimes made answers that went "through and through", beyond hope. The work, by its own force and fortune, sometimes outstrips the workman. And then, in defiance of the proprieties, whereas poets sometimes "flag and languish in a prosaic manner", prose will shine with the lustre, vigour, and boldness, with "the fury" of poetry.

And as to "affairs",—how spasmodic the mixture, collision or coincidence, of the mechanic succession of things with men's volition! Mere rumour, so large a factor in events,—who could trace out its ways? Various events (he was never tired of illustrating the fact)

"followed from the same counsel". Fortune, chance, that is to say, the incalculable contribution of mere matter to man, "would still be mistress of events"; and one might think it no unwisdom to commit everything to fortuity. But no! "fortune too is oftentimes observed to act by the rule of reason; chance itself comes round to hold of justice"; war, above all, being a matter in which fortune was inexplicable, though men might seem to have made it the main business of their lives. If "the force of all counsel lies in the occasion", that is because things perpetually shift. If man—his taste, his very conscience—change with the habit of time and place, that is because habit is the emphatic determination, the tyranny, of changing external and material circumstance. So it comes about that every one gives the name of barbarism to what is not in use round about him, excepting perhaps the Greeks and Romans, somewhat conventionally; and Montaigne was fond of assuring people, suddenly, that could we have those privileged Greeks and Romans actually to sit beside us for a while, they would be found to offend our niceties at a hundred points. We have great power of taking ourselves in, and "pay ourselves with words". Words too, language itself, and therewith the more intimate physiognomy of thought, "slip every day through our fingers". With his eye on his own labour, wistfully, he thought on the instability of the French language in particular—a matter, after all, so much less "perennial than brass". In no respect was nature more stable, more consecutive, than man.

In nature, indeed, as in one's self, there might be no ultimate inconsequence: only, "the soul looks upon things with another eye, and represents them to itself with another kind of face: for everything has many faces and several aspects. There is nothing single and rare in respect of itself, but only in respect of our knowledge, which is a wretched foundation whereon to ground our rules, and one that represents to us a very false image of things". Ah! even in so "dear" a matter as bodily health, immunity from physical pain, what doubts! what variations of experience, of learned opinion! Already, in six years of married life, of four children treated so carefully, never, for instance, roughly awaked from sleep, "wherein," he would observe, "children are much more profoundly involved than we",—of four children, two were dead, and one even now miserably sick. Seeing the doctor depart one morning a little hastily, on the payment of his fee, he was tempted to some nice questions as to the money's worth. "There are so many maladies, and so many circumstances, presented to the physician, that human sense must soon be at the end of its lesson:—the many complexions in a melancholy person; the many seasons in winter; the many nations in the French; the many ages

in age; the many celestial mutations in the conjunction of Venus and Saturn; the many parts in man's body, nay, in a finger. And suppose the cure effected, how can we assure ourselves that it was not because the disease was arrived at its period, or an effect of chance, or the operation of something else that the child had eaten, drunk, or touched that day, or by virtue of his mother's prayers? We suppose we see one side of a thing when we are really looking at another. As for me, I never see all of anything; neither do they who so largely promise to show it to others. Of the hundred faces that everything has I take one, and am for the most part attracted by some new light I find in it."

And that new light was sure to lead him back very soon to his "governing method, ignorance"—an ignorance "strong and generous, and that yields nothing in honour and courage to knowledge; an ignorance which to conceive requires no less knowledge than to conceive knowledge itself"—a sapient, instructed, shrewdly ascertained ignorance, suspended judgment, doubt everywhere.—Balances, very delicate balances; he was partial to that image of equilibrium, or preponderance, in things. But was there, after all, so much as preponderance anywhere? To Gaston there was a kind of fascination, an actually æsthetic beauty, in the spectacle of that keen-edged intelligence, dividing evidence so finely, like some exquisite steel instrument with impeccable sufficiency, always leaving the last word loyally to the central intellectual faculty, in an entire disinterestedness. If on the one hand he was always distrustful of things that he wished, on the other he had many opinions he would endeavour to make his son dislike, if he had one. What if the truest opinions were not always the most commodious to man, "being of so wild a composition"? He would say nothing to one party that he might not on occasion say to the other, "with a little alteration of accent". Yes! Doubt, everywhere! doubt in the far background, as the proper intellectual equivalent to the infinite possibilities of things: doubt, shrewdly economising the opportunities of the present hour, in the very spirit of the traveller who walks only for the walk's sake,—"every day concludes my expectation, and the journey of my life is carried on after the same fashion": doubt, finally, as "the best of pillows to sleep on". And in fact Gaston did sleep well after those long days of physical and intellectual movement, in that quiet world, till the spring came round again.

But beyond and above all the various interests upon which the philosopher's mind was for ever afloat, there was one subject always in prominence—himself. His minute peculiarities, mental and physical, what was constitutional with him as well as his transient humours,

how things affected him, what they really *were* to him, Michael, much more than man, all this Gaston came to know, as the world knew it afterwards in the Essays, often amused, sometimes irritated, but never suspicious of postures or insincerity. Montaigne himself admitted his egotism with frank humour:—"in favour of the Huguenots, who condemn our private confession, I confess myself in public". And this outward egotism of manner was but the symptom of a certain deeper doctrinal egotism:—"I have no other end in writing but to discover *myself*." And what was the purport, what the justification, of this undissembled egotism? It was the recognition, over against, or in continuation of, that world of floating doubt, of the individual mind, as for each one severally, at once the unique organ, and the only matter, of knowledge,—the wonderful energy, the reality and authority of that, in its absolute loneliness, conforming all things to its law, without witnesses as without judge, without appeal, save to itself. Whatever truth there might be, must come for each one from within, not from without. To that wonderful microcosm of the individual soul, of which, for each one, all other worlds are but elements,—to himself,—to what was apparent immediately to him, what was "properly of his own having and substance": he confidently dismissed the enquirer. His own egotism was but the pattern of the true intellectual life of every one. "The greatest thing in the world is for a man to know that he is his own. If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that they do not so much as think of themselves." How it had been "lodged in its author":—that, surely, was the essential question, concerning every opinion that comes to one man from another.

Yet, again, even on this ultimate ground of judgment, what undulancy, complexity, surprises!—"I have no other end in writing but to discover myself, who also shall peradventure be another thing to-morrow." The great work of his life, the Essays, he placed "now high, now low, with great doubt and inconstancy". "What are we but sedition? like this poor France, faction against faction, within ourselves, every place playing every moment its own game, with as much difference between us and ourselves as between ourselves and others. Whoever will look narrowly into his own bosom will hardly find himself twice in the same condition. I give to myself sometimes one face and sometimes another, according to the side I turn to. I have nothing to say of myself, entirely and without qualification. One grows familiar with all strange things by time. But the more I frequent myself and the better I know myself, the less do I understand myself. If others would consider themselves as I do, they would find themselves full of caprice. Rid myself of it I cannot without

making myself away. They who are not aware of it have the better bargain. And yet I know not whether they have or no!"

One's own experience!—that, at least, *was* one's own: low and earthy, it might be; still, the earth was, emphatically, good, good-natured; and he loved, emphatically, to recommend the wisdom, amid all doubts, of keeping close to it. Gaston soon knew well a certain threadbare garment worn by Montaigne in all their rides together, sitting quaintly on his otherwise gallant appointments,—an old mantle that had belonged to his father. Retained, as he tells us, in spite of its inconvenience, "because it seemed to envelope me in him", it was the symbol of a hundred natural, perhaps somewhat material, pieties. Parentage, kinship, relationship through earth,—the touch of that was everywhere like a caress to him. His fine taste notwithstanding, he loved, in those long rambles, to partake of homely fare, paying largely for it. Everywhere it was as if the earth in him turned kindly to earth. "Under the sun," the sturdy purple thistles, the blossoming burrs also, were worth knowing. Let us grow together with you! they seem to say. Himself was one of those whom he thought "Heaven favoured" in making them die, so naturally, by degrees. "I shall be blind before I am sensible of the decay of my sight, with such kindly artifice do the Fatal Sisters entwine our lives. I melt, and steal away from myself. How *variously* is it no longer I!" It was not he who would carry a furry robe at midsummer, because he might need it in the winter.—"In fine, we must live among the living, and let the river flow under the bridge without our care, above all things avoiding fear, that great disturber of reason. The thing in the world I am most afraid of is fear."

And still, health, the invincible survival of youth, "admonished him to a better wisdom than years and sickness". Was there anything better, fairer, than the beautiful light of health? To be in health was itself the sign, perhaps the essence, of wisdom—a wisdom, rich in counsels regarding all one's contacts with the earthy side of existence. And how he could laugh!—at that King of Thrace, for instance, who had a religion and a god all to himself, which his subjects might not presume to worship; at that King of Mexico, who swore at his coronation not only to keep the laws, but also to make the sun run his annual course; at those followers of Alexander, who all carried their heads on one side as Alexander did.

The natural second-best, the intermediate and unheroic virtue (even the Church, as we know, by no means *requiring* "heroic" virtue), was perhaps actually the best, better than any kind of heroism, in an age whose very virtues were apt to become insane; an age "guilty and extravagant" in its very justice; for which, as regards all that belongs

to the spirit, the one thing needful was moderation. And it was characteristic of Montaigne, a note of the real helpfulness there was in his thoughts, that he preferred to base virtue on low, safe ground. "The lowest walk is the safest: 'tis the seat of constancy." The wind about the tower, coming who knows whence and whither?—could one enjoy its music, unless one knew the foundations safe, twenty feet below-ground? Always he loved to hear such words as "soften and modify the temerity of our propositions". To say less than the truth about it, to dissemble the absoluteness of its claim, was agreeable to his confidence in the natural charm, the gaiety, of goodness, "that fair and beaten path nature has traced for us", over against any difficult militant or chimerical virtue.—"Never had any morose and ill-looking physician done anything to purpose." In that age, it was a great thing to be just blameless. Virtue had its bounds, "which once transgressed, the next step was into the territories of vice". "All decent and honest means of securing ourselves from harm, were not only permitted but commendable." Any man who despises his own life, might "always be master of that of another". He would not condemn "a magistrate who *sleeps*; provided the people under his charge sleep as well as he". Though a blundering world, in collusion with a prejudiced philosophy, has "a great suspicion of facility", there was a certain easy taking of things which made life the richer for others as well as for one's self, and was at least an excellent make-shift for disinterested service to them. With all his admiration for the antique greatness of character, he would never commend "so savage a virtue, and one that costs so dear", as that, for instance, of the Greek mother, the Roman father, who assisted to put their own erring sons to death. More truly commendable was the custom of the Lacedæmonians, who when they went to battle sacrificed always to the Muses, that "these might, by their sweetness and gaiety, soften martial fury." How had divine philosophy herself been discredited by the sour mask, the sordid patches, with which, her enemies surely! had sent her abroad into the world. "I love a gay and civil philosophy. There is nothing more *cheerful* than wisdom: I had like to have said more wanton."

Was that why his conversation was sometimes coarse? "All the contraries are to be found in me, in one corner or another"; if delicacy, so also coarseness. Delicacy there was, certainly,—a wonderful fineness of sensation. "To the end," he tells us, "that sleep should not so stupidly escape from me, I have caused myself to be disturbed in my sleep, so that I might the better and more sensibly taste and relish it.—Of scents, the simple and natural seem to me the most pleasing, and I have often observed that they cause an alteration in me, and work upon my spirits according to their several virtues.—In excessive

heats I always travel by night, from sunset to sunrise.—I am betimes sensible of the little breezes that begin to sing and whistle in the shrouds, the forerunners of the storm.—When I walk alone in a beautiful orchard, if my thoughts are for a while taken up with foreign occurrences, I some part of the time call them back again to my walk, to the orchard, to the sweetness of the solitude, and to myself.—There is nothing in us either purely corporeal or purely spiritual. 'Tis an inhuman wisdom that would have us despise and hate the culture of the body. 'Tis not a soul, 'tis not a body, we are training up, but a man; and we ought not to divide him. Of all the infirmities we have, the most savage is to despise our being."

There was a fineness of sensation in these unpremeditated thoughts, which to Gaston seemed to connect itself with the exquisite words he had found to paint his two great affections, for his father and for Étienne de la Boetie,—a fineness of sensation perhaps quite novel in that age, but still of *physical* sensation: and in pursuit of fine physical sensation he came, on his broad, easy, indifferent passage through the world, across the coarsest growths which also thrive "under the sun", and was not revolted. They were akin to that ruder earth within himself, of which a kind of undissembled greed was symptomatic; the love of "meats little roasted, very high, and even, as to several, quite gone"; while, in drinking, he loved "clear glass, that the eye might taste too, according to its capacity"; akin also to a certain slothfulness:—"Sleeping," he says, "has taken up a great part of my life." And there was almost nothing he would not say: no fact, no story, from his curious half-medical reading, he would not find some plausible pretext to tell. Man's kinship to the animal, the material, and all the proofs of it:—he would never blush at them! In truth, he led the way to the immodesty of French literature; and had his defence, a sort of defence, ready. "I know very well that few will quarrel with the licence of my writings, who have not more to quarrel with in the licence of their own thoughts."

Yet when Gaston, twenty years afterwards, heard of the seemingly pious end of Monsieur de Montaigne, he recalled a hundred, always quiet but not always insignificant, acts of devotion, noticeable in those old days, on passing a village church, or at home, in the little chapel—superstitions, concessions to others, strictly appropriate recognitions rather, as it might seem, of a certain great possibility, which might lie among the conditions of so complex a world. That was a point which could hardly escape so reflective a mind as Gaston's: and at a later period of his life, at the harvest of his own second thoughts, as he pondered on the influence over him of that two-sided thinker, the opinion that things as we find them would bear a certain old-fashioned

construction, seemed to have been the consistent motive, however secret and subtle in its working, of Montaigne's sustained intellectual activity. A lowly philosophy of ignorance would not be likely to disallow or discredit whatever intimations there might be, in the experience of the wise or of the simple, in favour of a venerable religion, which from its long history had come to seem like a growth of nature. Somewhere, among men's seemingly random and so inexplicable apprehensions, might lie the grains of a wisdom more precious than gold, or even its priceless pearl. That "free and roving thing", the human soul—what might it not have found out for itself, in a world so wide? To deny, at all events, would be only "to *limit* the mind, by negation".

It was not however this side of that double philosophy which recommended itself just now to Gaston. The master's wistful tolerance, so extraordinary a characteristic in that age, attracted him, in his present humour, not so much in connexion with those problematic heavenly lights that might find their way to one from infinite skies, as with the pleasant, quite finite, objects and experiences of the indubitable world of sense, so close around him. Over against the world's challenge to make trial of it, here was that general licence, which his own warm and curious appetite just then demanded of the moral theorist. For so pronounced a lover of sincerity as Monsieur de Montaigne, there was certainly a strange ambiguousness in the result of his lengthy enquiries, on the greatest as well as on the lightest matters, and it was inevitable that a listener should accept the dubious lesson in his own sense. Was this shrewd casuist only bringing him by a round-about way to principles he would not have cared to avow? To the great religious thinker of the next century, to Pascal, Montaigne was to figure as emphatically on the wrong side, not merely because "he that is not *with* us, is *against* us". It was something to have been, in the matter of religious tolerance, as on many other matters of justice and gentleness, the solitary conscience of the age. But could one really care for truth, who never even seemed to find it? Did he fear, perhaps, the practical responsibility of getting to the very bottom of certain questions? That the actual discourse of so keen a thinker appeared often inconsistent or inconsecutive, might be a hint perhaps that there was some deeper ground of thought in reserve; as if he were really moving, securely, over ground you did not see.—What might that ground be? As to Gaston himself,—had this kindly entertainer only been drawing the screws of a very complex piece of machinery which had worked well enough hitherto for all practical purposes?—Was this all that had been going on, while he lingered there, week after week, in a kind of devout attendance on theories,

and, for his part, feeling no reverberation of actual events around him, still less of great events in preparation? These were the questions Gaston had in mind, as, at length, he thanked his host one morning with real regret, and took his last look around that meditative place, the manuscripts, the books, the emblems,—the house of Circe on the wall.

A PRINCE OF COURT PAINTERS

EXTRACTS FROM AN OLD FRENCH JOURNAL

VALENCIENNES, *September 1701.*

THEY have been renovating my father's large workroom. That delightful, tumble-down old place has lost its moss-grown tiles and the green weather-stains we have known all our lives on the high whitewashed wall, opposite which we sit, in the little sculptor's yard, for the coolness, in summertime. Among old Watteau's workpeople came his son, "the genius", my father's godson and namesake, a dark-haired youth, whose large, unquiet eyes seemed perpetually wandering to the various drawings which lie exposed here. My father will have it that he is a genius indeed, and a painter born. We have had our September Fair in the *Grande Place*, a wonderful stir of sound and colour in the wide, open space beneath our windows. And just where the crowd was busiest young Antony was found, hoisted into one of those empty niches of the old *Hôtel de Ville*, sketching the scene to the life, but with a kind of grace—a marvellous tact of omission, as my father pointed out to us, in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's own window—which has made trite old Harlequin, Clown, and Columbine, seem like people in some fairyland; or like infinitely clever tragic actors, who, for the humour of the thing, have put on motley for once, and are able to throw a world of serious innuendo into their burlesque looks, with a sort of comedy which shall be but tragedy seen from the other side. He brought his sketch to our house to-day, and I was present when my father questioned him and commended his work. But the lad seemed not greatly pleased, and left untasted the glass of old Malaga which was offered to him. His father will hear nothing of educating him as a painter. Yet he is not ill-to-do, and has lately built himself a new stone house, big and grey and cold. Their old plastered house with the black timbers, in the *Rue des Cardinaux*, was prettier, dating from the time of the Spaniards, and one of the oldest in Valenciennes.

October 1701.

Chiefly through the solicitations of my father, old Watteau has consented to place Antony with a teacher of painting here. I meet him betimes on the way to his lessons, as I return from Mass; for he

still works with the masons, but making the most of late and early hours, of every moment of liberty. And then he has the feast-days, of which there are so many in this old-fashioned place. Ah! such gifts as his, surely, may once in a way make much industry seem worth while. He makes a wonderful progress. And yet, far from being set-up, and too easily pleased with what, after all, comes to him so easily, he has, my father thinks, too little self-approval for ultimate success. He is apt, in truth, to fall out too hastily with himself and what he produces. Yet here also there is the "golden mean". Yes! I could fancy myself offended by a sort of irony which sometimes crosses the half-melancholy sweetness of manner habitual with him; only that as I can see, he treats himself to the same quality.

October 1701.

Antony Watteau comes here often now. It is the instinct of a natural fineness in him, to escape when he can from that blank stone house, with so little to interest, and that homely old man and woman. The rudeness of his home has turned his feeling for even the simpler graces of life into a physical want, like hunger or thirst, which might come to greed; and methinks he perhaps over-values these things. Still, made as he is, his hard fate in that rude place must needs touch one. And then, he profits by the experience of my father, who has much knowledge in matters of art beyond his own art of sculpture; and Antony is not unwelcome to him. In these last rainy weeks especially, when he can't sketch out of doors, when the wind only half dries the pavement before another torrent comes, and people stay at home, and the only sound from without is the creaking of a restless shutter on its hinges, or the march across the *Place* of those weary soldiers, coming and going so interminably, one hardly knows whether to or from battle with the English and the Austrians, from victory or defeat:—Well! he has become like one of our family. "He will go far!" my father declares. He would go far, in the literal sense, if he might—to Paris, to Rome. It must be admitted that our Valenciennes is a quiet, nay! a sleepy place; sleepier than ever since it became French, and ceased to be so near the frontier. The grass is growing deep on our old ramparts, and it is pleasant to walk there—to walk there and muse; pleasant for a tame, unambitious soul such as mine.

December 1702.

Antony Watteau left us for Paris this morning. It came upon us quite suddenly. They amuse themselves in Paris. A scene-painter we have here, well known in Flanders, has been engaged to work in one of the Parisian play-houses; and young Watteau, of whom he had

some slight knowledge, has departed in his company. He doesn't know it was I who persuaded the scene-painter to take him; that he would find the lad useful. We offered him our little presents—fine thread-lace of our own making for his ruffles, and the like; for one must make a figure in Paris, and he is slim and well-formed. For myself I presented him with a silken purse I had long ago embroidered for another. Well! we shall follow his fortunes (of which I for one feel quite sure) at a distance. Old Watteau didn't know of his departure, and has been here in great anger.

December, 1703.

Twelve months to-day since Antony went to Paris! The first struggle must be a sharp one for an unknown lad in that vast, overcrowded place, even if he be as clever as young Antony Watteau. We may think, however, that he is on the way to his chosen end, for he returns not home; though, in truth, he tells those poor old people very little of himself. The apprentices of the M. Métyer for whom he works, labour all day long, each at a single part only,—*coiffure*, or robe, or hand,—of the cheap pictures of religion or fantasy he exposes for sale at a low price along the footways of the *Pont Notre-Dame*. Antony is already the most skilful of them, and seems to have been promoted of late to work on church pictures. I like the thought of that. He receives three *livres* a week for his pains, and his soup daily.

May 1705.

Antony Watteau has parted from the dealer in pictures *à bon marché*, and works now with a painter of furniture pieces (those headpieces for doors and the like, now in fashion) who is also *concierge* of the Palace of the Luxembourg. Antony is actually lodged somewhere in that grand place, which contains the king's collection of the Italian pictures he would so willingly copy. Its gardens also are magnificent, with something, as we understand from him, altogether of a novel kind in their disposition and embellishment. Ah! how I delight myself, in fancy at least, in those beautiful gardens, freer and trimmed less stiffly than those of other royal houses. Methinks I see him there, when his long summer-day's work is over, enjoying the cool shade of the stately, broad-foliaged trees, each of which is a great courtier, though it has its way almost as if it belonged to that open and unbuilt country beyond, over which the sun is sinking.

His thoughts, however, in the midst of all this, are not wholly away from home, if I may judge by the subject of a picture he hopes to sell for as much as sixty *livres*—*Un Départ de Troupes*, Soldiers Departing—one of those scenes of military life one can study so well here at Valenciennes.

June 1705.

Young Watteau has returned home—proof, with a character so independent as his, that things have gone well with him; and (it is agreed!) stays with us, instead of in the stonemason's house. The old people suppose he comes to us for the sake of my father's instruction. French people as we are become, we are still old Flemish, if not at heart, yet on the surface. Even in *French Flanders*, at Douai and Saint Omer, as I understand, in the churches and in people's houses, as may be seen from the very streets, there is noticeable a minute and scrupulous air of care-taking and neatness. Antony Watteau remarks this more than ever on returning to Valenciennes, and savours greatly, after his lodging in Paris, our Flemish cleanliness, lover as he is of distinction and elegance. Those worldly graces he seemed when a young lad almost to hunger and thirst for, as though truly the mere adornments of life were its necessities, he already takes as if he had been always used to them. And there is something noble—shall I say?—in his half-disdainful way of serving himself with what he still, as I think, secretly values over-much. There is an air of seemly thought—*le bel sérieux*—about him, which makes me think of one of those grave old Dutch statesmen in their youth, such as that famous William the Silent. And yet the effect of this first success of his (of more importance than its mere money value, as insuring for the future the full play of his natural powers) I can trace like the bloom of a flower upon him; and he has, now and then, the gaieties which from time to time, surely, must refresh all true artists, however hard-working and “painful”.

July 1705.

The charm of all this—his physiognomy and manner of being—has touched even my young brother, Jean-Baptiste. He is greatly taken with Antony, clings to him almost too attentively, and will be nothing but a painter, though my father would have trained him to follow his own profession. It may do the child good. He needs the expansion of some generous sympathy or sentiment in that close little soul of his, as I have thought, watching sometimes how his small face and hands are moved in sleep. A child of ten who cares only to save and possess, to hoard his tiny savings! Yet he is not otherwise selfish, and loves us all with a warm heart. Just now it is the moments of Antony's company he counts, like a little miser. Well! that may save him perhaps from developing a certain meanness of character I have sometimes feared for him.

August 1705.

We returned home late this summer evening—Antony Watteau,

my father and sisters, young Jean-Baptiste, and myself—from an excursion to Saint-Amand, in celebration of Antony's last day with us. After visiting the great abbey-church and its range of chapels, with their costly encumbrance of carved shrines and golden reliquaries and funeral scutcheons in the coloured glass, half seen through a rich enclosure of marble and brass-work, we supped at the little inn in the forest. Antony, looking well in his new-fashioned, long-skirted coat, and taller than he really is, made us bring our cream and wild strawberries out of doors, ranging ourselves according to his judgment for a hasty sketch (in that big pocket-book he carries) on the soft slope of one of those fresh spaces in the wood, where the trees uncloset a little, while Jean-Baptiste and my youngest sister danced a minuet on the grass, to the notes of some strolling lutanist who had found us out. He is visibly cheerful at the thought of his return to Paris, and became for a moment freer and more animated than I have ever yet seen him, as he discoursed to us about the paintings of Peter Paul Rubens in the church here. His words, as he spoke of them, seemed full of a kind of rich sunset with some moving glory within it. Yet I like far better than any of these pictures of Rubens a work of that old Dutch master, Peter Porbus, which hangs, though almost out of sight indeed, in our church at home. The patron saints, simple, and standing firmly on either side, present two homely old people to Our Lady enthroned in the midst, with the look and attitude of one for whom, amid her "glories" (depicted in dim little circular pictures, set in the openings of a chaplet of pale flowers around her) all feelings are over, except a great pitifulness. Her robe of shadowy blue suits my eyes better far than the hot flesh-tints of the Medicean ladies of the great Peter Paul, in spite of that amplitude and royal ease of action under their stiff court costumes, at which Antony Watteau declares himself in dismay.

August 1705.

I am just returned from early Mass. I lingered long after the office was ended, watching, pondering how in the world one could help a small bird which had flown into the church but could find no way out again. I suspect it will remain there, fluttering round and round distractedly, far up under the arched roof, till it dies exhausted. I seem to have heard of a writer who likened man's life to a bird passing just once only, on some winter night, from window to window, across a cheerfully-lighted hall. The bird, taken captive by the ill-luck of a moment, re-tracing its issueless circle till it expires within the close vaulting of that great stone church:—human life may be like that bird too!

Antony Watteau returned to Paris yesterday. Yes!—Certainly, great heights of achievement would seem to lie before him; access to regions whither one may find it increasingly hard to follow him even in imagination, and figure to one's self after what manner his life moves therein.

January 1709.

Anthony Watteau has competed for what is called the *Prix de Rome*, desiring greatly to profit by the grand establishment founded at Rome by King Lewis the Fourteenth, for the encouragement of French artists. He obtained only the second place, but does not renounce his desire to make the journey to Italy. Could I save enough by careful economies for that purpose? It might be conveyed to him in some indirect way that would not offend.

February 1712.

We read, with much pleasure for all of us, in the *Gazette* to-day, among other events of the great world, that Antony Watteau had been elected to the Academy of Painting under the new title of *Peintre des Fêtes Galantes*, and had been named also *Peintre du Roi*. My brother, Jean-Baptiste, ran to tell the news to old Jean-Philippe and Michelle Watteau.

A new manner of painting! The old furniture of people's rooms must needs be changed throughout, it would seem, to accord with this painting; or rather, the painting is designed exclusively to suit one particular kind of apartment. A manner of painting greatly prized, as we understand, by those Parisian judges who have had the best opportunity of acquainting themselves with whatever is most enjoyable in the arts:—such is the achievement of the young Watteau! He looks to receive more orders for his work than he will be able to execute. He will certainly relish—he, so elegant, so hungry for the colours of life—a free intercourse with those wealthy lovers of the arts, M. de Crozat, M. de Julienne, the Abbé de la Roque, the Count de Caylus, and M. Gersaint, the famous dealer in pictures, who are so anxious to lodge him in their fine *bôtels*, and to have him of their company at their country houses. Paris, we hear, has never been wealthier and more luxurious than now: and the great ladies outbid each other to carry his work upon their very fans. Those vast fortunes, however, seem to change hands very rapidly. And Antony's new manner? I am unable even to divine it—to conceive the trick and effect of it—at all. Only, something of lightness and coquetry I discern there, at variance, methinks, with his own singular gravity and even sadness of mien and mind, more answerable to the stately

apparelling of the age of Henry the Fourth, or of Lewis the Thirteenth, in these old, sombre Spanish houses of ours.

March 1713.

We have all been very happy,—Jean-Baptiste as if in a delightful dream. Antony Watteau, being consulted with regard to the lad's training as a painter, has most generously offered to receive him for his own pupil. My father, for some reason unknown to me, seemed to hesitate at the first; but Jean-Baptiste, whose enthusiasm for Antony visibly refines and beautifies his whole nature, has won the necessary permission, and this dear young brother will leave us to-morrow. Our regrets and his, at his parting from us for the first time, overtook our joy at his good fortune by surprise, at the last moment, just as we were about to bid each other good-night. For a while there had seemed to be an uneasiness under our cheerful talk, as if each one present were concealing something with an effort; and it was Jean-Baptiste himself who gave way at last. And then we sat down again, still together, and allowed free play to what was in our hearts, almost till morning, my sisters weeping much. I know better how to control myself. In a few days that delightful new life will have begun for him: and I have made him promise to write often to us. With how small a part of my whole life shall I be really living at Valenciennes!

January 1714.

Jean-Philippe Watteau has received a letter from his son to-day. Old Michéle Watteau, whose sight is failing, though she still works (half by touch, indeed) at her pillow-lace, was glad to hear me read the letter aloud more than once. It recounts—how modestly, and almost as a matter of course!—his late successes. And yet!—does he, in writing to these old people, purposely underrate his great good fortune and seeming happiness, not to shock them too much by the contrast between the delicate enjoyments of the life he now leads among the wealthy and refined, and that bald existence of theirs in his old home? A life, agitated, exigent, unsatisfying! That is what this letter really discloses, below so attractive a surface. As his gift expands so does that incurable restlessness one supposed but the humour natural to a promising youth who had still everything to do. And now the only realised enjoyment he has of all this might seem to be the thought of the independence it has purchased him, so that he can escape from one lodging-place to another, just as it may please him. He has already deserted, somewhat incontinently, more than one of those fine houses, the liberal air of which he used so greatly to affect, and which have so readily received him. Has he failed truly to grasp the

fact of his great success and the rewards that lie before him? At all events, he seems, after all, not greatly to value that dainty world he is now privileged to enter, and has certainly but little relish for his own works—those works which I for one so thirst to see.

March 1714.

We were all—Jean-Philippe, Michelle Watteau, and ourselves—half in expectation of a visit from Antony; and to-day, quite suddenly, he is with us. I was lingering after early Mass this morning in the church of Saint Vaast. It is good for me to be there. Our people lie under one of the great marble slabs before the *jubé*, some of the memorial brass balusters of which are engraved with their names and the dates of their decease. The settle of carved oak which runs all round the wide nave is my father's own work. The quiet spaciousness of the place is itself like a meditation, an "act of recollection", and clears away the confusions of the heart. I suppose the heavy droning of the *carillon* had smothered the sound of his footsteps, for on my turning round, when I supposed myself alone, Antony Watteau was standing near me. Constant observer as he is of the lights and shadows of things, he visits places of this kind at odd times. He has left Jean-Baptiste at work in Paris, and will stay this time with the old people, not at our house; though he has spent the better part of to-day in my father's workroom. He hasn't yet put off, in spite of all his late intercourse with the great world, his distant and preoccupied manner—a manner, it is true, the same to every one. It is certainly not through pride in his success, as some might fancy, for he was thus always. It is rather as if, with all that success, life and its daily social routine were somewhat of a burden to him.

April 1714.

At last we shall understand something of that new style of his—the *Watteau* style—so much relished by the fine people at Paris. He has taken it into his kind head to paint and decorate our chief *salon*—the room with the three long windows, which occupies the first floor of the house.

The room was a landmark, as we used to think, an inviolable milestone and landmark, of old Valenciennes fashion—that sombre style, indulging much in contrasts of black or deep brown with white, which the Spaniards left behind them here. Doubtless their eyes had found its shadows cool and pleasant, when they shut themselves in from the cutting sunshine of their own country. But in our country, where we must needs economise not the shade but the sun, its grandiosity weighs a little on one's spirits. Well! the rough plaster we used to

cover as well as might be with morsels of old figured arras-work, is replaced by dainty panelling of wood, with mimic columns, and a quite aerial scrollwork around sunken spaces of a pale-rose stuff and certain oval openings—two over the doors, opening on each side of the great couch which faces the windows, one over the chimney-piece, and one above the buffet which forms its *vis-à-vis*—four spaces in all, to be filled by and by with “fantasies” of the Four Seasons, painted by his own hand. He will send us from Paris arm-chairs of a new pattern he has devised, suitably covered, and a painted *clavecin*. Our old silver candlesticks look well on the chimney-piece. Odd, faint-coloured flowers fill coquettishly the little empty spaces here and there, like ghosts of nosegays left by visitors long ago, which paled thus, sympathetically, at the decease of their old owners; for, in spite of its new-fashionedness, all this array is really less like a new thing than the last surviving result of all the more lightsome adornments of past times. Only, the very walls seem to cry out:—Nol to make delicate insinuation, for a music, a conversation, nimbler than any we have known, or are likely to find here. For himself, he converses well, but very sparingly. He assures us, indeed, that the “new style” is in truth a thing of old days, of his own old days here in Valenciennes, when, working long hours as a mason’s boy, he in fancy reclothed the walls of this or that house he was employed in, with this fairy arrangement—itself like a piece of “chamber-music”, methinks, part answering to part; while no too trenchant note is allowed to break through the delicate harmony of white and pale red and little golder touches. Yet it is all very comfortable also, it must be confessed; with an elegant open place for the fire, instead of the big old stove of brown tiles. The ancient, heavy furniture of our grandparents goes up, with difficulty, into the garrets, much against my father’s inclination. To reconcile him to the change, Antony is painting his portrait in a vast *perruque*, and with more vigorous massing of light and shadow than he is wont to permit himself.

June 1714.

He has completed the ovals:—The Four Seasons. Oh! the summer like grace, the freedom and softness, of the “Summer”—a hayfield such as we visited to-day, but boundless, and with touches of levee Italian architecture in the hot, white, elusive distance, and wreaths of flowers, fairy hayrakes and the like, suspended from tree to tree with that wonderful lightness which is one of the charms of his work. I can understand through this, at last, what it is he enjoys, what he selects by preference, from all that various world we pass our lives in. I am struck by the purity of the room he has re-fashioned for us—

sort of *moral* purity; yet, in the *forms* and *colours* of things. Is the actual life of Paris, to which he will soon return, equally pure, that it relishes this kind of thing so strongly? Only, methinks 'tis a pity to incorporate so much of his work, of himself, with objects of use, which must perish by use, or disappear, like our own old furniture, with mere change of fashion.

July 1714.

On the last day of Antony Watteau's visit we made a party to Cambrai. We entered the cathedral church: it was the hour of Vespers, and it happened that *Monseigneur le Prince de Cambrai*, the author of *Télémaque*, was in his place in the choir. He appears to be of great age, assists but rarely at the offices of religion, and is never to be seen in Paris; and Antony had much desired to behold him. Certainly it was worth while to have come so far only to see him, and hear him give his pontifical blessing, in a voice feeble but of infinite sweetness, and with an inexpressibly graceful movement of the hands. A veritable *grand seigneur*! His refined old age, the impress of genius and honours, even his disappointments, concur with natural graces to make him seem too distinguished (a fitter word fails me) for this world. *Omnia vanitas*! he seems to say, yet with a profound resignation, which makes the things we are most of us so fondly occupied with look petty enough. *Omnia vanitas*! Is that indeed the proper comment on our lives, coming, as it does in this case, from one who might have made his own all that life has to bestow? Yet he was never to be seen at court, and has lived here almost as an exile. Was our "Great King Lewis" jealous of a true *grand seigneur* or *grand monarque* by natural gift and the favour of heaven, that he could not endure his presence?

July 1714.

My own portrait remains unfinished at his sudden departure. I sat for it in a walking-dress, made under his direction—a gown of a peculiar silken stuff, falling into an abundance of small folds, giving me "a certain air of piquancy" which pleases him, but is far enough from my true self. My old Flemish *faille*, which I shall always wear, suits me better.

I notice that our good-hearted but sometimes difficult friend said little of our brother Jean-Baptiste, though he knows us so anxious on his account—spoke only of his constant industry, cautiously, and not altogether with satisfaction, as if the sight of it wearied him.

September 1714.

Will Antony ever accomplish that long-pondered journey to Italy?

For his own sake, I should be glad he might. Yet it seems desolately far, across those great hills and plains. I remember how I formed a plan for providing him with a sum sufficient for the purpose. But that he no longer needs.

With myself, how to get through time becomes sometimes the question,—unavoidably; though it strikes me as a thing unspeakably sad in a life so short as ours. The sullenness of a long wet day is yielding just now to an outburst of watery sunset, which strikes from the far horizon of this quiet world of ours, over fields and willow-woods, upon the shifty weather-vanes and long-pointed windows of the tower on the square—from which the *Angelus* is sounding—with a momentary promise of a fine night. I prefer the *Salut* at Saint Vaast. The walk thither is a longer one, and I have a fancy always that I may meet Antony Watteau there again, any time; just as, when a child, having found one day a tiny box in the shape of a silver coin, for long afterwards I used to try every piece of money that came into my hands, expecting it to open.

September 1714.

We were sitting in the Watteau chamber for the coolness, this sultry evening. A sudden gust of wind ruffled the lights in the sconces on the walls: the distant rumblings, which had continued all the afternoon, broke out at last; and through the driving rain, a coach, rattling across the *Place*, stops at our door; in a moment Jean-Baptiste is with us once again; but with bitter tears in his eyes;—dismissed!

October 1714.

Jean-Baptiste! he too, rejected by Antony! It makes our friendship and fraternal sympathy closer. And still as he labours, not less sedulously than of old, and still so full of loyalty to his old master, in that *Watteau* chamber, I seem to see Antony himself, of whom Jean-Baptiste dares not yet speak,—to come very near his work, and understand his great parts. So Jean-Baptiste's work, in its nearness to his, may stand, for the future, as the central interest of my life. I bury myself in that.

February 1715.

If I understand anything of these matters, Antony Watteau paints that delicate life of Paris so excellently, with so much spirit, partly because, after all, he looks down upon it or despises it. To persuade myself of that, is my womanly satisfaction for his preference—his apparent preference—for a world so different from mine. Those coquetries, those vain and perishable graces, can be rendered so

perfectly, only through an intimate understanding of them. For him, to understand must be to despise them; while, (I think I know why.) he nevertheless undergoes their fascination. Hence that discontent with himself, which keeps pace with his fame. It would have been better for him—he would have enjoyed a purer and more real happiness—had he remained here, obscure; as it might have been better for me!

It is altogether different with Jean-Baptiste. He approaches that life, and all its pretty nothingness, from a level no higher than its own; and beginning just where Antony Watteau leaves off in disdain, produces a solid and veritable likeness of it and of its ways.

March 1715.

There are points in his painting (I apprehend this through his own persistently modest observations) at which he works out his purpose more excellently than Watteau; of whom he has trusted himself to speak at last, with a wonderful self-effacement, pointing out in each of his pictures, for the rest so just and true, how Antony would have managed this or that, and, with what an easy superiority, have done the thing better—done the impossible.

February 1716.

There are good things, attractive things, in life, meant for one and not for another—not meant perhaps for me; as there are pretty clothes which are not suitable for every one. I find a certain immobility of disposition in me, to quicken or interfere with which is like physical pain. He, so brilliant, petulant, mobile! I am better far beside Jean-Baptiste—in contact with his quiet, even labour, and manner of being. At first he did the work to which he had set himself, sullenly; but the mechanical labour of it has cleared his mind and temper at last, as a sullen day turns quite clear and fine by imperceptible change. With the earliest dawn he enters his workroom, the *Watteau* chamber, where he remains at work all day. The dark evenings he spends in industrious preparation with the *crayon* for the pictures he is to finish during the hours of daylight. His toil is also his amusement: he goes but rarely into the society whose manners he has to re-produce. The animals in his pictures, pet animals, are mere toys: he knows it. But he finishes a large number of works, door-heads, *clavier* cases, and the like. His happiest, his most genial moments, he puts, like savings of fine gold, into one particular picture, (true *opus magnum*, as he hopes,) *The Swing*. He has the secret of surprising effects with a certain pearl-grey silken stuff of his predilection; and it must be confessed that he paints hands—which a draughtsman, of course, should understand at least twice as well as all other people—with surpassing expression.

March 1716.

Is it the depressing result of this labour, of a too exacting labour? I know not. But at times, (it is his one melancholy!) he expresses a strange apprehension of poverty, of penury and mean surroundings in old age; reminding me of that childish disposition to hoard, which I noticed in him of old. And then—inglorious Watteau, as he is!—at times that steadiness, in which he is so great a contrast to Antony, as it were accumulates, changes, into a ray of genius, a grace, an inexplicable touch of truth, in which all his heaviness leaves him for a while, and he actually goes beyond the master; as himself protests to me, yet modestly. And still, it is precisely at those moments that he feels most the difference between himself and Antony Watteau. “In *that* country, *all* the pebbles are golden nuggets,” he says; with perfect good humour.

June 1716.

’Tis truly in a delightful abode that Antony Watteau is just now lodged—the *hôtel*, or town-house of M. de Crozat, which is not only a comfortable dwelling-place, but also a precious museum lucky people go far to see. Jean-Baptiste, too, has seen the place, and describes it. The antiquities, beautiful curiosities of all sorts—above all, the original drawings of those old masters Antony so greatly admires—are arranged all around one there, that the influence, the genius, of those things may imperceptibly play upon and enter into one, and form what one does. The house is situated near the *Rue Richelieu*, but has a large garden about it. M. de Crozat gives his musical parties there, and Antony Watteau has painted the walls of one of the apartments with the Four Seasons, after the manner of ours, but doubtless improved by second thoughts. This beautiful place is now Antony’s home for a while. The house has but one story, with attics in the *mansard* roofs, like those of a farmhouse in the country. I fancy Antony fled thither for a few moments, from the visitors who weary him; breathing the freshness of that dewy garden in the very midst of Paris. As for me, I suffocate this summer afternoon in this pretty *Watteau* chamber of ours, where Jean-Baptiste is at work so contentedly.

May 1717.

In spite of all that happened, Jean-Baptiste has been looking forward to a visit to Valenciennes which Antony Watteau had proposed to make. He hopes always—has a patient hope—that Antony’s former patronage of him may be revived. And now he is among us, actually at his work—restless and disquieting, meagre, like a woman with some nervous malady. Is it pity, then, pity only, one must feel for the brilliant one? He has been criticising the work of Jean-Baptiste, who

takes his judgments generously, gratefully. Can it be that, after all, he despises and is no true lover of his own art, and is but chilled by an enthusiasm for it in another, such as that of Jean-Baptiste? as if Jean-Baptiste over-valued it, or as if some ignobleness or blunder, some sign that he has really missed his aim, started into sight from his work at the sound of praise—as if such praise could hardly be altogether sincere.

June 1717.

And at last one has actual sight of his work—what it is. He has brought with him certain long-cherished designs to finish here in quiet, as he protests he has never finished before. That charming *Noblesse*—can it be really so distinguished to the minutest point, so naturally aristocratic? Half in masquerade, playing the drawing-room or garden comedy of life, these persons have upon them, not less than the landscape he composes, and among the accidents of which they group themselves with such a perfect fittingness, a certain light we should seek for in vain upon anything real. For their framework they have around them a veritable architecture—a tree-architecture—to which those moss-grown balusters, *termes*, statues, fountains, are really but accessories. Only, as I gaze upon those windless afternoons, I find myself always saying to myself involuntarily, “The evening will be a wet one.” The storm is always brooding through the massy splendour of the trees, above those sun-dried glades or lawns, where delicate children may be trusted thinly clad; and the secular trees themselves will hardly outlast another generation.

July 1717.

There has been an exhibition of his pictures in the Hall of the Academy of Saint Luke; and all the world has been to see.

Yes! Besides that unreal, imaginary light upon these scenes, these persons, which is pure gift of his, there was a light, a poetry, in those persons and things themselves, close at hand *we* had not seen. He has enabled us to see it: we are so much the better-off thereby, and I, for one, the better. The world he sets before us so engagingly has its care for purity, its cleanly preferences, in what one is to *see*—in the outsides of things—and there is something, a sign, a memento, at the least, of what makes life really valuable, even in that. There, is my simple notion, wholly womanly perhaps, but which I may hold by, of the purpose of the arts.

August 1717.

And yet! (to read my mind, my experience, in somewhat different

terms) methinks Antony Watteau reproduces that gallant world, those patched and powdered ladies and fine cavaliers, so much to its own satisfaction, partly because he despises it; if this be a possible condition of excellent artistic production. People talk of a new era now dawning upon the world, of fraternity, liberty, humanity, of a novel sort of social freedom in which men's natural goodness of heart will blossom at a thousand points hitherto repressed, of wars disappearing from the world in an infinite, benevolent ease of life—yes! perhaps of infinite littleness also. And it is the outward manner of that, which, partly by anticipation, and through pure intellectual power, Antony Watteau has caught, together with a flattering something of his own, added thereto. Himself really of the old time—that serious old time which is passing away, the impress of which he carries on his physiognomy—he dignifies, by what in him is neither more nor less than a profound melancholy, the essential insignificance of what he *wills* to touch in all that, transforming its mere pettiness into grace. It looks certainly very graceful, fresh, animated, “piquant”, as they love to say—yes! and withal, I repeat, perfectly pure, and may well congratulate itself on the loan of a fallacious grace, not its own. For in truth Antony Watteau is still the mason's boy, and deals with that world under a fascination, of the nature of which he is half-conscious methinks, puzzled at “the queer trick he possesses”, to use his own phrase. You see him growing ever more and more meagre, as he goes through the world and its applause. Yet he reaches with wonderful sagacity the secret of an adjustment of colours, a *coiffure*, a *toilette*, setting I know not what air of real superiority on such things. He will never overcome his early training; and these light things will possess for him always a kind of representative or borrowed worth, as characterising that impossible or forbidden world which the mason's boy saw through the closed gateways of the enchanted garden. Those trifling and petty graces, the *insignia* to him of that nobler world of aspiration and idea, even now that he is aware, as I conceive, of their true littleness, bring back to him, by the power of association, all the old magical exhilaration of his dream—his dream of a better world than the real one. There, is the formula, as I apprehend, of his success—of his extraordinary hold on things so alien from himself. And I think there is more real hilarity in my brother's *fêtes champêtres*. more truth to life, and therefore less distinction. Yes! the world profits by such reflection of its poor, coarse self, in one who renders all its caprices from the height of a Corneille. That is my way of making up to myself for the fact that I think *his* days, too, would have been really happier, had he remained obscure at Valenciennes.

September 1717.

My own poor likeness, begun so long ago, still remains unfinished on the easel, at his departure from Valenciennes—perhaps for ever; since the old people departed this life in the hard winter of last year, at no distant time from each other. It is pleasanter to him to sketch and plan than to paint and finish; and he is often out of humour with himself because he cannot project into a picture the life and spirit of his first thought with the *crayon*. He would fain begin where that famous master Gerard Dow left off, and snatch, as it were with a single stroke, what in him was the result of infinite patience. It is the sign of this sort of promptitude that he values solely in the work of another. To my thinking there is a kind of greed or grasping in that humour; as if things were not to last very long, and one must snatch opportunity. And often he succeeds. The old Dutch painter cherished with a kind of piety his colours and pencils. Antony Watteau, on the contrary, will hardly make any preparations for his work at all, or even clean his palette, in the dead-set he makes at improvisation. 'Tis the contrast perhaps between the staid Dutch genius and the petulant, sparkling French temper of this new era, into which he has thrown himself. Alas! it is already apparent that the result also loses something of longevity, of durability—the colours fading or changing, from the first, somewhat rapidly, as Jean-Baptiste notes. 'Tis true, a mere trifle alters or produces the expression. But then, on the other hand, in pictures the whole effect of which lies in a kind of harmony, the treachery of a single colour must needs involve the failure of the whole to outlast the fleeting grace of those social conjunctions it is meant to perpetuate. This is what has happened, in part, to that portrait on the easel. Meantime, he has commanded Jean-Baptiste to finish it; and so it must be.

October 1717.

Antony Watteau is an excellent judge of literature, and I have been reading (with infinite surprise!) in my afternoon walks in the little wood here, a new book he left behind him—a great favourite of his; as it has been a favourite with large numbers in Paris.* Those pathetic shocks of fortune, those sudden alternations of pleasure and remorse, which must always lie among the very conditions of an irregular and guilty love, as in sinful games of chance:—they have begun to talk of these things in Paris, to amuse themselves with the spectacle of them, set forth here, in the story of poor Manon Lescaut—for whom fidelity is impossible, so vulgarly eager for the money which can buy pleasures

* Possibly written at this date, but almost certainly not printed till many years later.—*Note in Second Edition.* [W.P.]

such as hers—with an art like Watteau's own, for lightness and grace. Incapacity of truth, yet with such tenderness, such a gift of tears, on the one side: on the other, a faith so absolute as to give to an illicit love almost the regularity of marriage! And this is the book those fine ladies in Watteau's "conversations", who look so exquisitely pure, lay down on the cushion when the children run up to have their laces righted. Yet the pity of it! What floods of weeping! There is a tone about it which strikes me as going well with the grace of these leafless birch-trees against the sky, the pale silver of their bark, and a certain delicate odour of decay which rises from the soil. It is all one half-light; and the heroine, nay! the hero himself also, that dainty Chevalier des Grieux, with all his fervour, have, I think, but a half-life in them truly, from the first. And I could fancy myself almost of their condition sitting here alone this evening, in which a premature touch of winter makes the world look but an inhospitable place of entertainment for one's spirit. With so little genial warmth to hold it there, one feels that the merest accident might detach that flighty guest altogether. So chilled at heart things seem to me, as I gaze on that glacial point in the motionless sky, like some mortal spot whence death begins to creep over the body!

And yet, in the midst of this, by mere force of contrast, comes back to me, very vividly, the true colour, ruddy with blossom and fruit, of the past summer, among the streets and gardens of some of our old towns we visited; when the thought of cold was a luxury, and the earth dry enough to sleep on. The summer was indeed a fine one; and the whole country seemed bewitched. A kind of infectious sentiment passed upon us, like an efflux from its flowers and flower-like architecture—flower-like to me at least, but of which I never felt the beauty before.

And as I think of that, certainly I have to confess that there is a wonderful reality about this lovers' story; an accordance between themselves and the conditions of things around them, so deep as to make it seem that the course of their lives could hardly have been other than it was. That impression comes, perhaps, wholly of the writer's skill; but, at all events, I must read the book no more.

June 1718.

And he has allowed that Mademoiselle Rosalba—"ce bel esprit"—who can discourse upon the arts like a master, to paint his portrait: has painted hers in return! She holds a lapful of white roses with her two hands. *Rosa Alba*—himself has inscribed it! It will be engraved, to circulate and perpetuate it the better.

One's journal, here in one's solitude, is of service at least in this,

that it affords an escape for vain regrets, angers, impatience. One puts this and that angry spasm into it, and is delivered from it so.

And then, it was at the desire of M. de Crozat that the thing was done. One must oblige one's patrons. The lady also, they tell me, is consumptive, like Antony himself, and like to die. And he, who has always lacked either the money or the spirits to make that long-pondered, much-desired journey to Italy, has found in her work the veritable accent and colour of those old Venetian masters he would so willingly have studied under the sunshine of their own land. Alas! How little peace have his great successes given him; how little of that quietude of mind, without which, methinks, one fails in true dignity of character.

November 1718.

His thirst for change of place has actually driven him to England, that veritable home of the consumptive. Ah me! I feel it may be the finishing stroke. To have run into the native country of consumption! Strange caprice of that desire to travel, which he has really indulged so little in his life—of the restlessness which, they tell me, is itself a symptom of this terrible disease!

January 1720.

As once before, after long silence, a token has reached us, a slight token that he remembers—an etched plate, one of the very few he has executed, with that old subject: *Soldiers on the March*. And the weary soldier himself is returning once more to Valenciennes, on his way from England to Paris.

February 1720.

Those sharply-arched brows, those restless eyes which seem larger than ever—something that seizes on one, and is almost terrible, in his expression—speak clearly, and irresistibly set one on the thought of a summing-up of his life. I am reminded of the day when, already with that air of seemly thought, *le bel sérieux*, he was found sketching, with so much truth to the inmost mind in them, those picturesque mountebanks at the Fair in the *Grande Place*; and I find, throughout his course of life, something of the essential melancholy of the comedian. He, so fastidious and cold, and who has never “ventured the representation of passion”, does but amuse the gay world; and is aware of that, though certainly unamused himself all the while. Just now, however, he is finishing a very different picture—that too, full of humour—an English family-group, with a little girl riding a wooden horse: the father, and the mother holding his tobacco-pipe, stand in the centre.

March 1720.

To-morrow he will depart finally. And this evening the Syndics of the Academy of Saint Luke came with their scarves and banners to conduct their illustrious fellow-citizen, by torchlight, to supper in their Guildhall, where all their beautiful old corporation plate will be displayed. The *Watteau salon* was lighted up to receive them. There is something in the payment of great honours to the living which fills one with apprehension, especially when the recipient of them looks so like a dying man. God have mercy on him!

April 1721.

We were on the point of retiring to rest last evening when a messenger arrived post-haste with a letter on behalf of Antony Watteau, desiring Jean-Baptiste's presence at Paris. We did not go to bed that night; and my brother was on his way before daylight, his heart full of a strange conflict of joy and apprehension.

May 1721.

A letter at last! from Jean-Baptiste, occupied with cares of all sorts at the bedside of the sufferer. Antony fancying that the air of the country might do him good, the Abbé Haranger, one of the canons of the Church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, where he was in the habit of hearing Mass, has lent him a house at Nogent-sur-Marne. There he receives a few visitors. But in truth the places he once liked best, the people, nay! the very friends, have become to him nothing less than insupportable. Though he still dreams of change, and would fain try his native air once more, he is at work constantly upon his art; but solely by way of a teacher, instructing (with a kind of remorseful diligence, it would seem) Jean-Baptiste, who will be heir to his unfinished work, and take up many of his pictures where he has left them. He seems now anxious for one thing only, to give his old "dismissed" disciple what remains of himself, and the last secrets of his genius. His property—9000 livres only—goes to his relations. Jean-Baptiste has found these last weeks immeasurably useful.

For the rest, bodily exhaustion perhaps, and this new interest in an old friend, have brought him tranquillity at last, a tranquillity in which he is much occupied with matters of religion. Ah! it was ever so with me. And one *lives* also most reasonably so.—With women, at least, it is thus, quite certainly. Yet I know not what there is of a pity which strikes deep, at the thought of a man, a while since so strong, turning his face to the wall from the things which most occupy men's lives. 'Tis that homely, but honest *curé* of Nogent he has caricatured so often, who attends him.

July 1721.

Our incomparable Watteau is no more! Jean-Baptiste returned unexpectedly. I heard his hasty footstep on the stairs. We turned together into that room; and he told his story there. Antony Watteau departed suddenly, in the arms of M. Gersaint, on one of the late hot days of July. At the last moment he had been at work upon a crucifix for the good *curé* of Nogent, liking little the very rude one he possessed. He died with all the sentiments of religion.

He has been a sick man all his life. He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all.

ITALY

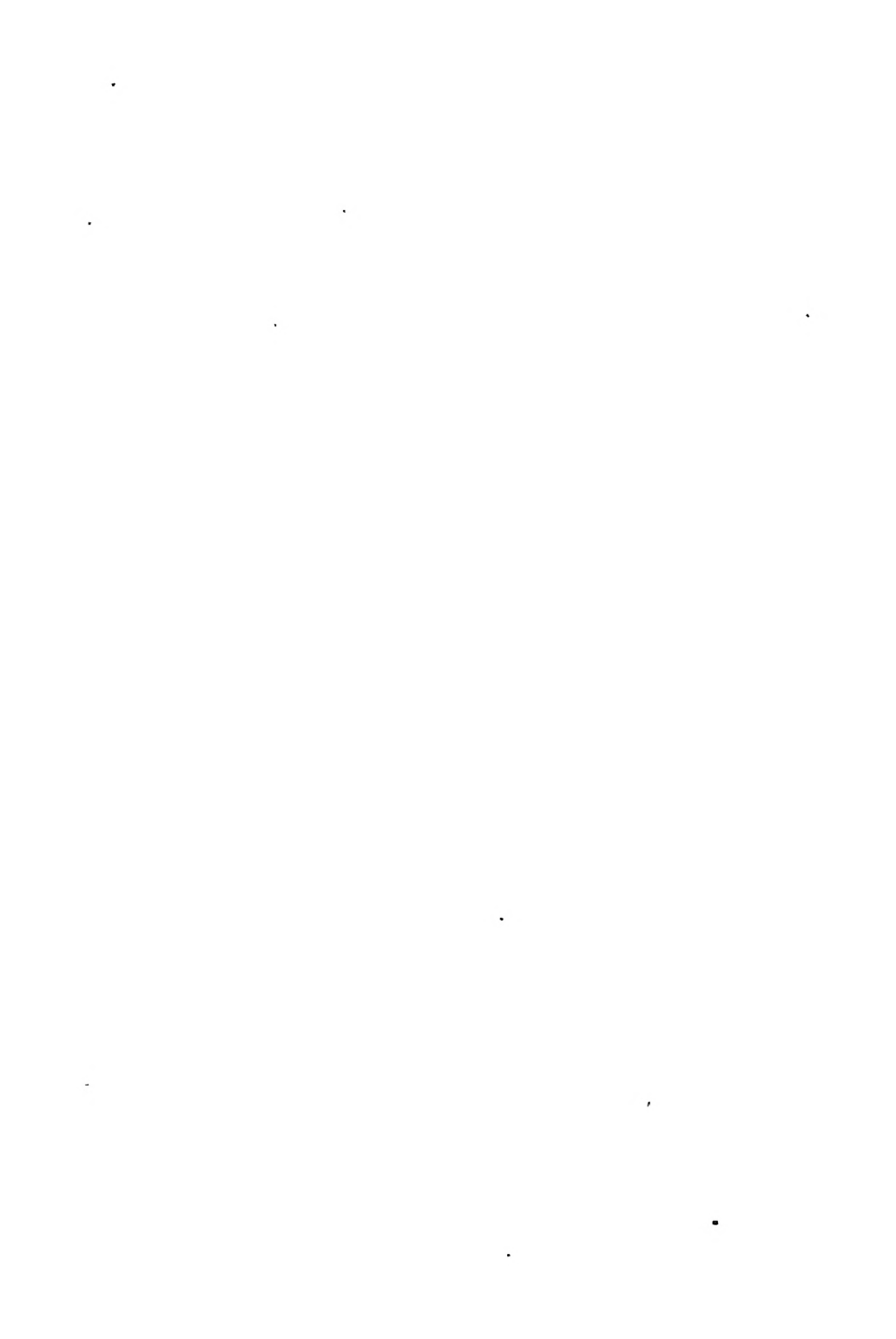
PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

LEONARDO DA VINCI

THE SCHOOL OF GIORGIONE



PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

No account of the Renaissance can be complete without some notice of the attempt made by certain Italian scholars of the fifteenth century to reconcile Christianity with the religion of ancient Greece. To reconcile forms of sentiment which at first sight seem incompatible, to adjust the various products of the human mind to one another in one many-sided type of intellectual culture, to give humanity, for heart and imagination to feed upon, as much as it could possibly receive, belonged to the generous instincts of that age. An earlier and simpler generation had seen in the gods of Greece so many malignant spirits, the defeated but still living centres of the religion of darkness, struggling, not always in vain, against the kingdom of light. Little by little, as the natural charm of pagan story reasserted itself over minds emerging out of barbarism, the religious significance which had once belonged to it was lost sight of, and it came to be regarded as the subject of a purely artistic or poetical treatment. But it was inevitable that from time to time minds should arise deeply enough impressed by its beauty and power to ask themselves whether the religion of Greece was indeed a rival of the religion of Christ; for the older gods had rehabilitated themselves, and men's allegiance was divided. And the fifteenth century was an impassioned age, so ardent and serious in its pursuit of art that it consecrated everything with which art had to do as a religious object. The restored Greek literature had made it familiar, at least in Plato, with a style of expression concerning the earlier gods, which had about it something of the warmth and unction of a Christian hymn. It was too familiar with such language to regard mythology as a mere story; and it was too serious to play with a religion.

"Let me briefly remind the reader"—says Heine, in the *Gods in Exile*, an essay full of that strange blending of sentiment which is characteristic of the traditions of the middle age concerning the pagan religions—"how the gods of the older world, at the time of the definite triumph of Christianity, that is, in the third century, fell into painful embarrassments, which greatly resembled certain tragical situations of their earlier life. They now found themselves beset by the same troublesome necessities to which they had once before been exposed during the primitive ages, in that revolutionary epoch when the Titans broke out of the custody of Orcus, and, piling Pelion on

Ossa, scaled Olympus. Unfortunate gods! They had then to take flight ignominiously, and hide themselves among us here on earth, under all sorts of disguises. The larger number betook themselves to Egypt, where for greater security they assumed the forms of animals, as is generally known. Just in the same way, they had to take flight again, and seek entertainment in remote hiding-places, when those iconoclastic zealots, the black brood of monks, broke down all the temples, and pursued the gods with fire and curses. Many of these unfortunate emigrants, now entirely deprived of shelter and ambrosia, must needs take to vulgar handicrafts, as a means of earning their bread. Under these circumstances, many whose sacred groves had been confiscated, let themselves out for hire as woodcutters in Germany, and were forced to drink beer instead of nectar. Apollo seems to have been content to take service under graziers, and as he had once kept the cows of Admetus, so he lived now as a shepherd in Lower Austria. Here, however, having become suspected on account of his beautiful singing, he was recognised by a learned monk as one of the old pagan gods, and handed over to the spiritual tribunal. On the rack he confessed that he was the god Apollo; and before his execution he begged that he might be suffered to play once more upon the lyre, and to sing a song. And he played so touchingly, and sang with such magic, and was withal so beautiful in form and feature, that all the women wept, and many of them were so deeply impressed that they shortly afterwards fell sick. Some time afterwards the people wished to drag him from the grave again, that a stake might be driven through his body, in the belief that he had been a vampire, and that the sick women would by this means recover. But they found the grave empty."

The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was, in many things, great rather by what it designed than by what it achieved. Much which it aspired to do, and did but imperfectly or mistakenly, was accomplished in what is called the *éclaircissement* of the eighteenth century, or in our own generation; and what really belongs to the revival of the fifteenth century is but the leading instinct, the curiosity, the initiatory idea. It is so with this very question of the reconciliation of the religion of antiquity with the religion of Christ. A modern scholar occupied by this problem might observe that all religions may be regarded as natural products, that, at least in their origin, their growth, and decay, they have common laws, and are not to be isolated from the other movements of the human mind in the periods in which they respectively prevailed; that they arise spontaneously out of the human mind, as expressions of the varying phases of its sentiment concerning the unseen world; that every intellectual product must be

judged from the point of view of the age and the people in which it was produced. He might go on to observe that each has contributed something to the development of the religious sense, and ranging them as so many stages in the gradual education of the human mind, justify the existence of each. The basis of the reconciliation of the religions of the world would thus be the inexhaustible activity and creativeness of the human mind itself, in which all religions alike have their root, and in which all alike are reconciled; just as the fancies of childhood and the thoughts of old age meet and are laid to rest, in the experience of the individual.

Far different was the method followed by the scholars of the fifteenth century. They lacked the very rudiments of the historic sense, which, by an imaginative act, throws itself back into a world unlike one's own, and estimates every intellectual creation in its connexion with the age from which it proceeded. They had no idea of development, of the differences of ages, of the process by which our race has been "educated". In their attempts to reconcile the religions of the world, they were thus thrown back upon the quicksand of allegorical interpretation. The religions of the world were to be reconciled, not as successive stages in a regular development of the religious sense, but as subsisting side by side, and substantially in agreement with one another. And here the first necessity was to misrepresent the language, the conceptions, the sentiments, it was proposed to compare and reconcile. Plato and Homer must be made to speak agreeably to Moses. Set side by side, the mere surfaces could never unite in any harmony of design. Therefore one must go below the surface, and bring up the supposed secondary, or still more remote meaning—that diviner signification held in reserve, *in recessu divinius aliquid*, latent in some stray touch of Homer, or figure of speech in the books of Moses.

And yet as a curiosity of the human mind, a "madhouse-cell", if you will, into which we may peep for a moment, and see it at work weaving strange fancies, the allegorical interpretation of the fifteenth century has its interest. With its strange web of imagery, its quaint conceits, its unexpected combinations and subtle moralising, it is an element in the local colour of a great age. It illustrates also the faith of that age in all oracles, its desire to hear all voices, its generous belief that nothing which had ever interested the human mind could wholly lose its vitality. It is the counterpart, though certainly the feebler counterpart, of that practical truce and reconciliation of the gods of Greece with the Christian religion, which is seen in the art of the time. And it is for his share in this work, and because his own story is a sort of analogue or visible equivalent to the expression of

this purpose in his writings, that something of a general interest still belongs to the name of Pico della Mirandola, whose life, written by his nephew Francis, seemed worthy, for some touch of sweetness in it, to be translated out of the original Latin by Sir Thomas More, that great lover of Italian culture, among whose works the life of Pico, *Earl of Mirandola, and a great lord of Italy*, as he calls him, may still be read, in its quaint, antiquated English.

Marsilio Ficino has told us how Pico came to Florence. It was the very day—some day probably in the year 1482—on which Ficino had finished his famous translation of Plato into Latin, the work to which he had been dedicated from childhood by Cosmo de' Medici, in furtherance of his desire to resuscitate the knowledge of Plato among his fellow-citizens. Florence indeed, as M. Renan has pointed out, had always had an affinity for the mystic and dreamy philosophy of Plato, while the colder and more practical philosophy of Aristotle had flourished in Padua, and other cities of the north; and the Florentines, though they knew perhaps very little about him, had had the name of the great idealist often on their lips. To increase this knowledge, Cosmo had founded the Platonic academy, with periodical discussions at the Villa Careggi. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the council in 1438 for the reconciliation of the Greek and Latin Churches, had brought to Florence many a needy Greek scholar. And now the work was completed, the door of the mystical temple lay open to all who could construe Latin, and the scholar rested from his labour; when there was introduced into his study, where a lamp burned continually before the bust of Plato, as other men burned lamps before their favourite saints, a young man fresh from a journey, "of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair, his colour white, intermingled with comely reds, his eyes grey, and quick of look, his teeth white and even, his hair yellow and abundant," and trimmed with more than the usual artifice of the time.

It is thus that Sir Thomas More translates the words of the biographer of Pico, who, even in outward form and appearance, seems an image of that inward harmony and completeness, of which he is so perfect an example. The word *mystic* has been usually derived from a Greek word which signifies *to shut*, as if one *shut one's lips* brooding on what cannot be uttered; but the Platonists themselves derive it rather from the act of *shutting the eyes*, that one may see the more, inwardly. Perhaps the eyes of the mystic Ficino, now long past the midway of life, had come to be thus half-closed; but when a young man, not unlike the archangel Raphael, as the Florentines of that age depicted him in his wonderful walk with Tobit, or Mercury, as he

might have appeared in a painting by Sandro Botticelli or Piero di Cosimo, entered his chamber, he seems to have thought there was something not wholly earthly about him; at least, he ever afterwards believed that it was not without the co-operation of the stars that the stranger had arrived on that day. For it happened that they fell into a conversation, deeper and more intimate than men usually fall into at first sight. During this conversation Ficino formed the design of devoting his remaining years to the translation of Plotinus, that new Plato, in whom the mystical element in the Platonic philosophy had been worked out to the utmost limit of vision and ecstasy; and it is in dedicating this translation to Lorenzo de' Medici that Ficino has recorded these incidents.

It was after many wanderings, wanderings of the intellect as well as physical journeys, that Pico came to rest at Florence. Born in 1463, he was then about twenty years old. He was called Giovanni at baptism, Pico, like all his ancestors, from Picus, nephew of the Emperor Constantine, from whom they claimed to be descended, and Mirandola from the place of his birth, a little town afterwards part of the duchy of Modena, of which small territory his family had long been the feudal lords. Pico was the youngest of the family, and his mother, delighting in his wonderful memory, sent him at the age of fourteen to the famous school of law at Bologna. From the first, indeed, she seems to have had some presentiment of his future fame, for, with a faith in omens characteristic of her time, she believed that a strange circumstance had happened at the time of Pico's birth—the appearance of a circular flame which suddenly vanished away, on the wall of the chamber where she lay. He remained two years at Bologna; and then, with an inexhaustible, unrivalled thirst for knowledge, the strange, confused, uncritical learning of that age, passed through the principal schools of Italy and France, penetrating, as he thought, into the secrets of all ancient philosophies, and many Eastern languages. And with this flood of erudition came the generous hope, so often disabused, of reconciling the philosophers with one another, and all alike with the Church. At last he came to Rome. There, like some knight-errant of philosophy, he offered to defend nine hundred bold paradoxes, drawn from the most opposite sources, against all comers. But the pontifical court was led to suspect the orthodoxy of some of these propositions, and even the reading of the book which contained them was forbidden by the Pope. It was not until 1493 that Pico was finally absolved, by a brief of Alexander the Sixth. Ten years before that date he had arrived at Florence; an early instance of those who, after following the vain hope of an impossible reconciliation from system to system, have at last fallen back unsatisfied on the simplicities of their childhood's belief.

The oration which Pico composed for the opening of this philosophical tournament still remains; its subject is the dignity of human nature, the greatness of man. In common with nearly all medieval speculation, much of Pico's writing has this for its drift; and in common also with it, Pico's theory of that dignity is founded on a misconception of the place in nature both of the earth and of man. For Pico the earth is the centre of the universe: and around it, as a fixed and motionless point, the sun and moon and stars revolve, like diligent servants or ministers. And in the midst of all is placed man, *nodus et vinculum mundi*, the bond or copula of the world, and the "interpreter of nature": that famous expression of Bacon's really belongs to Pico. *Tritum est in scholis*, he says, *esse hominem minorem mundum, in quo mixtum ex elementis corpus et spiritus coelestis et plantarum anima vegetalis et brutorum sensus et ratio et angelica mens et Dei similitudo conspicitur*:—"It is a commonplace of the schools that man is a little world, in which we may discern a body mingled of earthy elements, and ethereal breath, and the vegetable life of plants, and the senses of the lower animals, and reason, and the intelligence of angels, and a likeness to God."

A commonplace of the schools! But perhaps it had some new significance and authority, when men heard one like Pico reiterate it; and, false as its basis was, the theory had its use. For this high dignity of man, thus bringing the dust under his feet into sensible communion with the thoughts and affections of the angels, was supposed to belong to him, not as renewed by a religious system, but by his own natural right. The proclamation of it was a counterpoise to the increasing tendency of medieval religion to depreciate man's nature, to sacrifice this or that element in it, make it ashamed of itself, to keep the degrading or painful accidents of it always in view. It helped man onward to that reassertion of himself, that rehabilitation of human nature, the body, the senses, the heart, the intelligence, which the Renaissance fulfils. And yet to read a page of one of Pico's forgotten books is like a glance into one of those ancient sepulchres, upon which the wanderer in classical lands has sometimes stumbled, with the old disused ornaments and furniture of a world wholly unlike ours still fresh in them. That whole conception of nature is so different from our own. For Pico the world is a limited place, bounded by actual crystal walls, and a material firmament; it is like a painted toy, like that map or system of the world, held, as a great target or shield, in the hands of the creature *Logos*, by whom the Father made all things, in one of the earlier frescoes of the *Campo Santo* at Pisa. How different from this childish dream is our own conception of nature, with its unlimited space, its innumerable suns, and the earth but a mote in the beam; how different the strange new awe, or superstition, with which

it fills our minds! "The silence of those infinite spaces," says Pascal, contemplating a starlight night, "the silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me":—*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*.

He was already almost wearied out when he came to Florence. He had loved much and been beloved by women, "wandering over the crooked hills of delicious pleasure"; but their reign over him was over, and long before Savonarola's famous "bonfire of vanities", he had destroyed those love-songs in the vulgar tongue, which would have been so great a relief to us, after the scholastic prolixity of his Latin writings. It was in another spirit that he composed a Platonic commentary, the only work of his in Italian which has come down to us, on the "Song of Divine Love"—*secondo la mente ed opinione dei Platonici*—"according to the mind and opinion of the Platonists", by his friend Hieronymo Beniveni, in which, with an ambitious array of every sort of learning, and a profusion of imagery borrowed indifferently from the astrologers, the Cabala, and Homer, the Scripture, and Dionysius the Areopagite, he attempts to define the stages by which the soul passes from the earthly to the unseen beauty. A change indeed had passed over him, as if the chilling touch of the abstract and disembodied beauty Platonists profess to long for were already upon him. Some sense of this, perhaps, coupled with that over-brightness which in the popular imagination always betokens an early death, made Camilla Rucellai, one of those prophetic women whom the preaching of Savonarola had raised up in Florence, declare, seeing him for the first time, that he would depart in the time of lilies—prematurely, that is, like the field-flowers which are withered by the scorching sun almost as soon as they are sprung up. He now wrote down those thoughts on the religious life which Sir Thomas More turned into English, and which another English translator thought worthy to be added to the books of the *Imitation*. "It is not hard to know God, provided one will not force oneself to define Him":—has been thought a great saying of Joubert's. "Love God," Pico writes to Angelo Politian, "we rather may, than either know Him, or by speech utter Him. And yet had men liefer by knowledge never find that which they seek, than by love possess that thing, which also without love were in vain found."

Yet he who had this fine touch for spiritual things did not—and in this is the enduring interest of his story—even after his conversion, forget the old gods. He is one of the last who seriously and sincerely entertained the claim on men's faith of the pagan religions; he is anxious to ascertain the true significance of the obscurest legend, the lightest tradition concerning them. With many thoughts and many influences which led him in that direction, he did not become a monk; only he

became gentle and patient in disputation; retaining "somewhat of the old plenty, in dainty viand and silver vessel", he gave over the greater part of his property to his friend, the mystical poet Beniveni, to be spent by him in works of charity, chiefly in the sweet charity of providing marriage-dowries for the peasant girls of Florence. His end came in 1494, when, amid the prayers and sacraments of Savonarola, he died of fever, on the very day on which Charles the Eighth entered Florence, the seventeenth of November, yet in the time of lilies—the lilies of the shield of France, as the people now said, remembering Camilla's prophecy. He was buried in the conventual church of Saint Mark, in the hood and white frock of the Dominican order.

It is because the life of Pico, thus lying down to rest in the Dominican habit, yet amid thoughts of the older gods, himself like one of those comely divinities, reconciled indeed to the new religion, but still with a tenderness for the earlier life, and desirous literally to "bind the ages each to each by natural piety"—it is because this life is so perfect a parallel to the attempt made in his writings to reconcile Christianity with the ideas of paganism, that Pico, in spite of the scholastic character of those writings, is really interesting. Thus, in the *Heptaplus*, or *Discourse on the Seven Days of the Creation*, he endeavours to reconcile the accounts which pagan philosophy had given of the origin of the world with the account given in the books of Moses—the *Timæus* of Plato with the book of *Genesis*. The *Heptaplus* is dedicated to Lorenzo the Magnificent, whose interest, the preface tells us, in the secret wisdom of Moses is well known. If Moses seems in his writings simple and even popular, rather than either a philosopher or a theologian, that is because it was an institution with the ancient philosophers, either not to speak of divine things at all, or to speak of them dissemblingly: hence their doctrines were called mysteries. Taught by them, Pythagoras became so great a "master of silence", and wrote almost nothing, thus hiding the words of God in his heart, and speaking wisdom only among the perfect. In explaining the harmony between Plato and Moses, Pico lays hold on every sort of figure and analogy, on the double meanings of words, the symbols of the Jewish ritual, the secondary meanings of obscure stories in the later Greek mythologists. Everywhere there is an unbroken system of correspondences. Every object in the terrestrial world is an analogue, a symbol or counterpart, of some higher reality in the starry heavens, and this again of some law of the angelic life in the world beyond the stars. There is the element of fire in the material world; the sun is the fire of heaven; and in the super-celestial world there is the fire of the seraphic intelligence. "But behold how they differ! The elementary fire burns, the heavenly fire vivifies, the super-celestial fire loves." In this way, every

natural object, every combination of natural forces, every accident in the lives of men, is filled with higher meanings. Omens, prophecies, supernatural coincidences, accompany Pico himself all through life. There are oracles in every tree and mountain-top, and a significance in every accidental combination of the events of life.

This constant tendency to symbolism and imagery gives Pico's work a figured style, by which it has some real resemblance to Plato's, and he differs from other mystical writers of his time by a genuine desire to know his authorities at first hand. He reads Plato in Greek, Moses in Hebrew, and by this his work really belongs to the higher culture. Above all, we have a constant sense in reading him, that his thoughts, however little their positive value may be, are connected with springs beneath them of deep and passionate emotion; and when he explains the grades or steps by which the soul passes from the love of a physical object to the love of unseen beauty, and unfolds the analogies between this process and other movements upward of human thought, there is a glow and vehemence in his words which remind one of the manner in which his own brief existence flamed itself away.

I said that the Renaissance of the fifteenth century was, in many things, great rather by what it designed or aspired to do, than by what it actually achieved. It remained for a later age to conceive the true method of effecting a scientific reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy. For that age the only possible reconciliation was an imaginative one, and resulted from the efforts of artists, trained in Christian schools, to handle pagan subjects; and of this artistic reconciliation work like Pico's was but the feebler counterpart. Whatever philosophers had to say on one side or the other, whether they were successful or not in their attempts to reconcile the old to the new, and to justify the expenditure of so much care and thought on the dreams of a dead faith, the imagery of the Greek religion, the direct charm of its story, were by artists valued and cultivated for their own sake. Hence a new sort of mythology, with a tone and qualities of its own. When the ship-load of sacred earth from the soil of Jerusalem was mingled with the common clay in the *Campo Santo* at Pisa, a new flower grew up from it, unlike any flower men had seen before, the anemone with its concentric rings of strangely blended colour, still to be found by those who search long enough for it, in the long grass of the Maremma. Just such a strange flower was that mythology of the Italian Renaissance, which grew up from the mixture of two traditions, two sentiments, the sacred and the profane. Classical story was regarded as so much imaginative material to be received and assimilated. It did not come into men's minds to ask curiously of science, concerning

the origin of such story, its primary form and import, its meaning for those who projected it. The thing sank into their minds, to issue forth again with all the tangle about it of medieval sentiment and ideas. In the *Doni Madonna* in the *Tribune* of the *Uffizi**, Michelangelo actually brings the pagan religion, and with it the unveiled human form, the sleepy-looking fauns of a Dionysiac revel, into the presence of the Madonna, as simpler painters had introduced there other products of the earth, birds or flowers, while he has given to that Madonna herself much of the uncouth energy of the older and more primitive "Mighty Mother".

This picturesque union of contrasts, belonging properly to the art of the close of the fifteenth century, pervades, in Pico della Mirandola, an actual person, and that is why the figure of Pico is so attractive. He will not let one go; he wins one on, in spite of one's self, to turn again to the pages of his forgotten books, although we know already that the actual solution proposed in them will satisfy us as little as perhaps it satisfied him. It is said that in his eagerness for mysterious learning he once paid a great sum for a collection of cabalistic manuscripts, which turned out to be forgeries; and the story might well stand as a parable of all he ever seemed to gain in the way of actual knowledge. He had sought knowledge, and passed from system to system, and hazarded much; but less for the sake of positive knowledge than because he believed there was a spirit of order and beauty in knowledge, which would come down and unite what men's ignorance had divided, and renew what time had made dim. And so, while his actual work has passed away, yet his own qualities are still active, and himself remains, as one alive in the grave, *caesiis et vigilibus oculis*, as his biographer describes him, and with that sanguine, clear skin, *decenti rubore interspersa*, as with the light of morning upon it; and he has a true place in that group of great Italians who fill the end of the fifteenth century with their names, he is a true *humanist*. For the essence of humanism is that belief of which he seems never to have doubted, that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality—no language they have spoken, nor oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal.

* "Uffizi," so Pater spells it. In Italy it is written "Uffizi". [R.A.]

SANDRO BOTTICELLI

IN Leonardo's treatise on painting only one contemporary is mentioned by name—Sandro Botticelli. This pre-eminence may be due to chance only, but to some will rather appear a result of deliberate judgment; for people have begun to find out the charm of Botticelli's work, and his name, little known in the last century, is quietly becoming important. In the middle of the fifteenth century he had already anticipated much of that meditative subtlety, which is sometimes supposed peculiar to the great imaginative workmen of its close. Leaving the simple religion which had occupied the followers of Giotto for a century, and the simple naturalism which had grown out of it, a thing of birds and flowers only, he sought inspiration in what to him were works of the modern world, the writings of Dante and Boccaccio, and in new readings of his own of classical stories: or, if he painted religious incidents, painted them with an under-current of original sentiment, which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject. What is the peculiar sensation, what is the peculiar quality of pleasure, which his work has the property of exciting in us, and which we cannot get elsewhere? For this, especially when he has to speak of a comparatively unknown artist, is always the chief question which a critic has to answer.

In an age when the lives of artists were full of adventure, his life is almost colourless. Criticism indeed has cleared away much of the gossip which Vasari accumulated, has touched the legend of Lippo and Lucrezia, and rehabilitated the character of Andrea del Castagno. But in Botticelli's case there is no legend to dissipate. He did not even go by his true name: Sandro is a nickname, and his true name is Filipepi, Botticelli being only the name of the goldsmith who first taught him art. Only two things happened to him, two things which he shared with other artists:—he was invited to Rome to paint in the Sistine Chapel, and he fell in later life under the influence of Savonarola, passing apparently almost out of men's sight in a sort of religious melancholy, which lasted till his death in 1515, according to the received date. Vasari says that he plunged into the study of Dante, and even wrote a comment on the *Divine Comedy*. But it seems strange that he should have lived on inactive so long; and one almost wishes that some document might come to light, which, fixing the

date of his death earlier, might relieve one, in thinking of him, of his dejected old age.

He is before all things a poetical painter, blending the charm of story and sentiment, the medium of the art of poetry, with the charm of line and colour, the medium of abstract painting. So he becomes the illustrator of Dante. In a few rare examples of the edition of 1481, the blank spaces, left at the beginning of every canto for the hand of the illuminator, have been filled, as far as the nineteenth canto of the *Inferno*, with impressions of engraved plates, seemingly by way of experiment, for in the copy in the Bodleian Library, one of the three impressions it contains has been printed upside down, and much awry, in the midst of the luxurious printed page. Giotto, and the followers of Giotto, with their almost childish religious aim, had not learned to put that weight of meaning into outward things, light, colour, everyday gesture, which the poetry of the *Divine Comedy* involves, and before the fifteenth century Dante could hardly have found an illustrator. Botticelli's illustrations are crowded with incident, blending, with a naïve carelessness of pictorial propriety, three phases of the same scene into one plate. The grotesques, so often a stumbling-block to painters, who forget that the words of a poet, which only feebly present an image to the mind, must be lowered in key when translated into visible form, make one regret that he has not rather chosen for illustration the more subdued imagery of the *Purgatorio*. Yet in the scene of those who "go down quick into hell", there is an inventive force about the fire taking hold on the upturned soles of the feet, which proves that the design is no mere translation of Dante's words, but a true painter's vision; while the scene of the Centaurs wins one at once, for, forgetful of the actual circumstances of their appearance, Botticelli has gone off with delight on the thought of the Centaurs themselves, bright, small creatures of the woodland, with arch baby faces and mignon forms, drawing tiny bows.

Botticelli lived in a generation of naturalists, and he might have been a mere naturalist among them. There are traces enough in his work of that alert sense of outward things, which, in the pictures of that period, fills the lawns with delicate living creatures, and the hillsides with pools of water, and the pools of water with flowering reeds. But this was not enough for him; he is a visionary painter, and in his visionariness he resembles Dante. Giotto, the tried companion of Dante, Masaccio, Ghirlandajo even, do but transcribe, with more or less refining, the outward image; they are dramatic, not visionary painters; they are almost impassive spectators of the action before them. But the genius of which Botticelli is the type usurps the data before it as the exponent of ideas, moods, visions of its own; in

this interest it plays fast and loose with those data, rejecting some and isolating others, and always combining them anew. To him, as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality; but awake in him, moreover, by some subtle law of his own structure, a mood which it awakes in no one else, of which it is the double or repetition, and which it clothes, that all may share it, with visible circumstance.

But he is far enough from accepting the conventional orthodoxy of Dante which, referring all human action to the simple formula of purgatory, heaven and hell, leaves an insoluble element of prose in the depths of Dante's poetry. One picture of his, with the portrait of the donor, Matteo Palmieri, below, had the credit or discredit of attracting some shadow of ecclesiastical censure. This Matteo Palmieri, (two dim figures move under that name in contemporary history,) was the reputed author of a poem, still unedited, *La Città Divina*, which represented the human race as an incarnation of those angels who, in the revolt of Lucifer, were neither for Jehovah nor for His enemies, a fantasy of that earlier Alexandrian philosophy about which the Florentine intellect in that century was so curious. Botticelli's picture may have been only one of those familiar compositions in which religious reverie has recorded its impressions of the various forms of beatified existence—*Glorias*, as they were called, like that in which Giotto painted the portrait of Dante; but somehow it was suspected of embodying in a picture the wayward dream of Palmieri, and the chapel where it hung was closed. Artists so entire as Botticelli are usually careless about philosophical theories, even when the philosopher is a Florentine of the fifteenth century, and his work a poem in *terza rima*. But Botticelli, who wrote a commentary on Dante, and became the disciple of Savonarola, may well have let such theories come and go across him. True or false, the story interprets much of the peculiar sentiment with which he infuses his profane and sacred persons, comely, and in a certain sense like angels, but with a sense of displacement or loss about them—the wistfulness of exiles, conscious of a passion and energy greater than any known issue of them explains, which runs through all his varied work with a sentiment of ineffable melancholy.

So just what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell, Botticelli accepts, that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work. His interest is neither in the untempered goodness of Angelico's saints, nor the untempered evil of Orcagna's *Inferno*; but with men and

women, in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. His morality is all sympathy; and it is this sympathy, conveying into his work somewhat more than is usual of the true complexion of humanity, which makes him, visionary as he is, so forcible a realist.

It is this which gives in his Madonnas their unique expression and charm. He has worked out in them a distinct and peculiar type, definite enough in his own mind, for he has painted it over and over again, sometimes one might think almost mechanically, as a pastime during that dark period when his thoughts were so heavy upon him. Hardly any collection of note is without one of these circular pictures, into which the attendant angels depress their heads so naïvely. Perhaps you have sometimes wondered why those peevish-looking Madonnas, conformed to no acknowledged or obvious type of beauty, attract you more and more, and often come back to you when the Sistine Madonna and the Virgins of Fra Angelico are forgotten. At first, contrasting them with those, you may have thought that there was something in them mean or abject even, for the abstract lines of the face have little nobleness, and the colour is wan. For with Botticelli she too, though she holds in her hands the "Desire of all nations", is one of those who are neither for Jehovah nor for His enemies; and her choice is on her face. The white light on it is cast up hard and cheerless from below, as when snow lies upon the ground, and the children look up with surprise at the strange whiteness of the ceiling. Her trouble is in the very caress of the mysterious child, whose gaze is always far from her, and who has already that sweet look of devotion which men have never been able altogether to love, and which still makes the born saint an object almost of suspicion to his earthly brethren. Once, indeed, he guides her hand to transcribe in a book the words of her exaltation, the *Ave*, and the *Magnificat*, and the *Gaude Maria*, and the young angels, glad to rouse her for a moment from her dejection, are eager to hold the inkhorn and to support the book. But the pen almost drops from her hand, and the high cold words have no meaning for her, and her true children are those others, among whom, in her rude home, the intolerable honour came to her, with that look of wistful inquiry on their irregular faces which you see in startled animals—gipsy children, such as those who, in Apennine villages, still hold out their long brown arms to beg of you, but on Sundays become *enfants du chœur*, with their thick black hair nicely combed, and fair white linen on their sunburnt throats.

What is strangest is that he carries this sentiment into classical subjects, its most complete expression being a picture in the *Uffizi*, of Venus rising from the sea, in which the grotesque emblems of the middle age, and a landscape full of its peculiar feeling, and even its strange draperies, powdered all over in the Gothic manner with a quaint conceit of daisies, frame a figure that reminds you of the faultless nude studies of Ingres. At first, perhaps, you are attracted only by a quaintness of design, which seems to recall all at once whatever you have read of Florence in the fifteenth century; afterwards you may think that this quaintness must be incongruous with the subject, and that the colour is cadaverous or at least cold. And yet, the more you come to understand what imaginative colouring really is, that all colour is no mere delightful quality of natural things, but a spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit, the better you will like this peculiar quality of colour; and you will find that quaint design of Botticelli's a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period. Of the Greeks as they really were, of their difference from ourselves, of the aspects of their outward life, we know far more than Botticelli, or his most learned contemporaries; but for us long familiarity has taken off the edge of the lesson, and we are hardly conscious of what we owe to the Hellenic spirit. But in pictures like this of Botticelli's you have a record of the first impression made by it on minds turned back towards it, in almost painful aspiration, from a world in which it had been ignored so long; and in the passion, the energy, the industry of realisation, with which Botticelli carries out his intention, is the exact measure of the legitimate influence over the human mind of the imaginative system of which this is perhaps the central myth. The light is indeed cold—mere sunless dawn; but a later painter would have cloyed you with sunshine; and you can see the better for that quietness in the morning air each long promontory, as it slopes down to the water's edge. Men go forth to their labours until the evening; but she is awake before them, and you might think that the sorrow in her face was at the thought of the whole long day of love yet to come. An emblematical figure of the wind blows hard across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea "showing his teeth", as it moves, in thin lines of foam, and sucking in, one by one, the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's flowers always are. Botticelli meant all this imagery to be altogether pleasurable; and it was partly an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time, that subdued and chilled it. But this pre-

dilection for minor tones counts also; and what is unmistakable is the sadness with which he has conceived the goddess of pleasure, as the depository of a great power over the lives of men.

I have said that the peculiar character of Botticelli is the result of a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rarer moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks, and that this conveys into his work somewhat more than painting usually attains of the true complexion of humanity. He paints the story of the goddess of pleasure in other episodes besides that of her birth from the sea, but never without some shadow of death in the grey flesh and wan flowers. He paints Madonnas, but they shrink from the pressure of the divine child, and plead in unmistakable undertones for a warmer, lower humanity. The same figure—tradition connects it with Simonetta, the Mistress of Giuliano de' Medici—appears again as Judith, returning home across the hill country, when the great deed is over, and the moment of revulsion come, when the olive branch in her hand is becoming a burthen; as *Justice*, sitting on a throne, but with a fixed look of self-hatred which makes the sword in her hand seem that of a suicide; and again as *Veritas*, in the allegorical picture of *Calumnia*, where one may note in passing the suggestiveness of an accident which identifies the image of Truth with the person of Venus. We might trace the same sentiment through his engravings; but his share in them is doubtful, and the object of this brief study has been attained, if I have defined aright the temper in which he worked.

But, after all, it may be asked, is a painter like Botticelli—a secondary painter, a proper subject for general criticism? There are a few great painters, like Michelangelo or Leonardo, whose work has become a force in general culture, partly for this very reason that they have absorbed into themselves all such workmen as Sandro Botticelli; and, over and above mere technical or antiquarian criticism, general criticism may be very well employed in that sort of interpretation which adjusts the position of these men to general culture, whereas smaller men can be the proper subjects only of technical or antiquarian treatment. But, besides those great men, there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere; and these too have their place in general culture, and must be interpreted to it by those who have felt their charm strongly, and are often the object of a special diligence and a consideration wholly affectionate, just because there is not about

them the stress of a great name and authority. Of this select number Botticelli is one. He has the freshness, the uncertain and diffident promise, which belong to the earlier Renaissance itself, and make it perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the mind. In studying his work one begins to understand to how great a place in human culture the art of Italy had been called.

LUCA DELLA ROBBIA

THE Italian sculptors of the earlier half of the fifteenth century are more than mere forerunners of the great masters of its close, and often reach perfection, within the narrow limits which they chose to impose on their work. Their sculpture shares with the paintings of Botticelli and the churches of Brunelleschi that profound expressiveness, that intimate impress of an indwelling soul, which is the peculiar fascination of the art of Italy in that century. Their works have been much neglected, and often almost hidden away amid the frippery of modern decoration, and we come with some surprise on the places where their fire still smoulders. One longs to penetrate into the lives of the men who have given expression to so much power and sweetness. But it is part of the reserve, the austere dignity and simplicity of their existence, that their histories are for the most part lost, or told but briefly. From their lives, as from their work, all tumult of sound and colour has passed away. Mino, the Raphael of sculpture, Maso del Rodario, whose works add a further grace to the church of Como, Donatello even,—one asks in vain for more than a shadowy outline of their actual days,

Something more remains of Luca della Robbia; something more of a history, of outward changes and fortunes, is expressed through his work. I suppose nothing brings the real air of a Tuscan town so vividly to mind as those pieces of pale blue and white earthenware, by which he is best known, like fragments of the milky sky itself, fallen into the cool streets, and breaking into the darkened churches. And no work is less imitable: like Tuscan wine, it loses its savour when moved from its birthplace, from the crumbling walls where it was first placed. Part of the charm of this work, its grace and purity and finish of expression, is common to all the Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century; for Luca was first of all a worker in marble, and his works in *terra cotta* only transfer to a different material the principles of his sculpture.

These Tuscan sculptors in the fifteenth century worked for the most part in low relief, giving even to their monumental effigies something of its depression of surface, getting into them by this means a pathetic suggestion of the wasting and etherealisation of death. They are haters of all heaviness and emphasis, of strongly-opposed light and shade, and seek their means of delineation among those last refinements

of shadow, which are almost invisible except in a strong light, and which the finest pencil can hardly follow. The whole essence of their work is *expression*, the passing of a smile over the face of a child, the ripple of the air on a still day over the curtain of a window ajar.

What is the precise value of this system of sculpture, this low relief? Luca della Robbia, and the other sculptors of the school to which he belongs, have before them the universal problem of their art; and this system of low relief is the means by which they meet and overcome the special limitation of sculpture.

That limitation results from the material and other necessary conditions of all sculptured work, and consists in the tendency of such work to a hard realism, a one-sided presentment of mere form, that solid material frame which only motion can relieve, a thing of heavy shadows, and an individuality of expression pushed to caricature. Against this tendency to the hard presentment of mere form trying vainly to compete with the reality of nature itself, all noble sculpture constantly struggles; each great system of sculpture resisting it in its own way, etherealising, spiritualising, relieving its stiffness, its heaviness, and death. The use of colour in sculpture is but an unskilful contrivance to effect, by borrowing from another art, what the nobler sculpture effects by strictly appropriate means. To get not colour, but the equivalent of colour; to secure the expression and the play of life; to expand the too firmly fixed individuality of pure, unrelieved, uncoloured form:—this is the problem which the three great styles in sculpture have solved in three different ways.

Allgemeinheit—breadth, generality, universality—is the word chosen by Winckelmann, and after him by Goethe and many German critics, to express that law of the most excellent Greek sculptors, of Pheidias and his pupils, which prompted them constantly to seek the type^e in the individual, to abstract and express only what is structural and permanent, to purge from the individual all that belongs only to him, all the accidents, the feelings and actions of the special moment, all that (because in its own nature it endures but for a moment) is apt to look like a frozen thing if one arrests it.

In this way their works came to be like some subtle extract or essence, or almost like pure thoughts or ideas: and hence the breadth of humanity in them, that detachment from the conditions of a particular place or people, which has carried their influence far beyond the age which produced them, and insured them universal acceptance.

That was the Greek way of relieving the hardness and unspirituality of pure form. But it involved to a certain degree the sacrifice of what we call *expression*; and a system of abstraction which aimed always at the broad and general type, at the purging away from the individual

of what belonged only to him, and of the mere accidents of a particular time and place, imposed upon the range of effects open to the Greek sculptor limits somewhat narrowly defined. When Michelangelo came, therefore, with a genius spiritualised by the reverie of the middle age, penetrated by its spirit of inwardness and introspection, living not a mere outward life like the Greek, but a life full of intimate experiences, sorrows, consolations, a system which sacrificed so much of what was inward and unseen could not satisfy him. To him, lover and student of Greek sculpture as he was, work which did not bring what was inward to the surface, which was not concerned with individual expression, with individual character and feeling, the special history of the special soul, was not worth doing at all.

And so, in a way quite personal and peculiar to himself, which often is, and always seems, the effect of accident, he secured for his work individuality and intensity of expression, while he avoided a too heavy realism, that tendency to harden into caricature which the representation of feeling in sculpture is apt to display. What time and accident, its centuries of darkness under the furrows of the "little Melian farm", have done with singular felicity of touch for the Venus of Melos, fraying its surface and softening its lines, so that some spirit in the thing seems always on the point of breaking out, as though in it classical sculpture had advanced already one step into the mystical Christian age, its expression being in the whole range of ancient work most like that of Michelangelo's own:—this effect Michelangelo gains by leaving nearly all his sculpture in a puzzling sort of incompleteness, which suggests rather than realises actual form. Something of the wasting of that snow-image which he moulded at the command of Piero de' Medici, when the snow lay one night in the court of the Pitti palace, almost always lurks about it, as if he had determined to make the quality of a task, exacted from him half in derision, the pride of all his work. Many have wondered at that incompleteness, suspecting, however, that Michelangelo himself loved and was loath to change it, and feeling at the same time that they too would lose something if the half-realised form ever quite emerged from the stone, so rough-hewn here, so delicately finished there; and they have wished to fathom the charm of this incompleteness. Well! that incompleteness is Michelangelo's equivalent for colour in sculpture; it is his way of etherealising pure form, of relieving its stiff realism, and communicating to it breath, pulsation, the effect of life. It was a characteristic too which fell in with his peculiar temper and mode of living, his disappointments and hesitations. And it was in reality perfect finish. In this way he combines the utmost amount of passion and intensity with the sense of a yielding and flexible life: he gets not vitality

merely, but a wonderful force of expression.

Midway between these two systems—the system of the Greek sculptors and the system of Michelangelo—comes the system of Luca della Robbia and the other Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century, partaking both of the *Allgemeinheit* of the Greeks, their way of extracting certain select elements only of pure form and sacrificing all the rest, and the studied incompleteness of Michelangelo, relieving that sense of intensity, passion, energy, which might otherwise have stiffened into caricature. Like Michelangelo, these sculptors fill their works with intense and individualised expression. Their noblest works are the careful sepulchral portraits of particular persons—the monument of Conte Ugo in the *Badia* of Florence, of the youthful Medea Colleoni, with the wonderful, long throat, in the chapel on the cool north side of the Church of *Santa Maria Maggiore* at Bergamo—monuments such as abound in the churches of Rome, inexhaustible in suggestions of repose, of a subdued Sabbatic joy, a kind of sacred grace and refinement. And these elements of tranquillity, of repose, they unite to an intense and individual expression by a system of conventionalism as skilful and subtle as that of the Greeks, repressing all such curves as indicate solid form, and throwing the whole into low relief.

The life of Luca, a life of labour and frugality, with no adventure and no excitement except what belongs to the trial of new artistic processes, the struggle with new artistic difficulties, the solution of purely artistic problems, fills the first seventy years of the fifteenth century. After producing many works in marble for the *Duomo* and the *Campanile* of Florence, which place him among the foremost masters of the sculpture of his age, he became desirous to realise the spirit and manner of that sculpture, in a humbler material, to unite its science, its exquisite and expressive system of low relief, to the homely art of pottery, to introduce those high qualities into common things, to adorn and cultivate daily household life. In this he is profoundly characteristic of the Florence of that century, of that in it which lay below its superficial vanity and caprice, a certain old-world modesty and seriousness and simplicity. People had not yet begun to think that what was good art for churches was not so good, or less fitted, for their own houses. Luca's new work was in plain white earthenware at first, a mere rough imitation of the costly, laboriously wrought marble, finished in a few hours. But on this humble path he found his way to a fresh success, to another artistic grace. The fame of the oriental pottery, with its strange, bright colours—colours of art, colours not to be attained in the natural stone—mingled with the tradition of the old Roman pottery of the neigh-

bourhood. The little red, coral-like jars of Arezzo, dug up in that district from time to time, are much prized. These colours haunted Luca's fancy. "He still continued seeking something more," his biographer says of him; "and instead of making his figures of baked earth simply white, he added the further invention of giving them colour, to the astonishment and delight of all who beheld them"—*Cosa singolare, e molto utile per la state!*—a curious thing, and very useful for summer-time, full of coolness and repose for hand and eye. Luca loved the forms of various fruits, and wrought them into all sorts of marvellous frames and garlands, giving them their natural colours, only subdued a little, a little paler than nature.

I said that the art of Luca della Robbia possessed in an unusual measure that special characteristic which belongs to all the workmen of his school, a characteristic which, even in the absence of much positive information about their actual history, seems to bring those workmen themselves very near to us. They bear the impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call *intimité*, by which is meant some subtler sense of originality—the seal on a man's work of what is most inward and peculiar in his moods, and manner of apprehension: it is what we call *expression*, carried to its highest intensity of degree. That characteristic is rare in poetry, rarer still in art, rarest of all in the abstract art of sculpture; yet essentially, perhaps, it is the quality which alone makes work in the imaginative order really worth having at all. It is because the works of the artists of the fifteenth century possess this quality in an unmistakable way that one is anxious to know all that can be known about them and explain to one's self the secret of their charm.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

HOMO MINISTER ET INTERPRES NATURÆ

IN Vasari's life of Leonardo da Vinci as we now read it there are some variations from the first edition. There, the painter who has fixed the outward type of Christ for succeeding centuries was a bold speculator, holding lightly by other men's beliefs, setting philosophy above Christianity. Words of his, trenchant enough to justify this impression, are not recorded, and would have been out of keeping with a genius of which one characteristic is the tendency to lose itself in a refined and graceful mystery. The suspicion was but the time-honoured mode in which the world stamps its appreciation of one who has thoughts for himself alone, his high indifference, his intolerance of the common forms of things; and in the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional. But it is still by a certain mystery in his work, and something enigmatical beyond the usual measure of great men, that he fascinates, or perhaps half repels. His life is one of sudden revolts, with intervals in which he works not at all, or apart from the main scope of his work. By a strange fortune the pictures on which his more popular fame rested disappeared early from the world, like the *Battle of the Standard*; or are mixed obscurely with the product of meaner hands, like the *Last Supper*. His type of beauty is so exotic that it fascinates a larger number than it delights, and seems more than that of any other artist to reflect ideas and views and some scheme of the world within; so that he seemed to his contemporaries to be the possessor of some unsanctified and secret wisdom; as to Michelet and others to have anticipated modern ideas. He trifles with his genius, and crowds all his chief work into a few tormented years of later life; yet he is so possessed by his genius that he passes unmoved through the most tragic events, overwhelming his country and friends, like one who comes across them by chance on some secret errand.

His *legend*, as the French say, with the anecdotes which every one remembers, is one of the most brilliant chapters of Vasari. Later writers merely copied it, until, in 1804, Carlo Amoretti applied to it a criticism which left hardly a date fixed, and not one of those anecdotes untouched. The various questions thus raised have since that time become, one after another, subjects of special study, and mere anti-

quarianism has in this direction little more to do. For others remain the editing of the thirteen books of his manuscripts, and the separation by technical criticism of what in his reputed works is really his, from what is only half his, or the work of his pupils. But a lover of strange souls may still analyse for himself the impression made on him by those works, and try to reach through it a definition of the chief elements of Leonardo's genius. The *legend*, as corrected and enlarged by its critics, may now and then intervene to support the results of this analysis.

His life has three divisions—thirty years at Florence, nearly twenty years at Milan, then nineteen years of wandering, till he sinks to rest under the protection of Francis the First at the *Château de Clou*. The dishonour of illegitimacy hangs over his birth. Piero Antonio, his father, was of a noble Florentine house, of Vinci in the *Val d'Arno*, and Leonardo, brought up delicately among the true children of that house, was the love-child of his youth, with the keen, puissant nature such children often have. We see him in his boyhood fascinating all men by his beauty, improvising music and songs, buying the caged birds and setting them free, as he walked the streets of Florence, fond of odd bright dresses and spirited horses.

From his earliest years he designed many objects, and constructed models in relief, of which Vasari mentions some of women smiling. His father, pondering over this promise in the child, took him to the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, then the most famous artist in Florence. Beautiful objects lay about there—reliquaries, pyxes, silver images for the pope's chapel at Rome, strange fancy-work of the middle age, keeping odd company with fragments of antiquity, then but lately discovered. Another student Leonardo may have seen there—a lad into whose soul the level light and ærial illusions of Italian sunsets had passed, in after days famous as Perugino. Verrocchio was an artist of the earlier Florentine type, carver, painter, and worker in metals, in one; designer, not of pictures only, but of all things for sacred or household use, drinking-vessels, ambries, instruments of music, making them all fair to look upon, filling the common ways of life with the reflexion of some far-off brightness; and years of patience had refined his hand till his work was now sought after from distant places.

It happened that Verrocchio was employed by the brethren of Vallombrosa to paint the Baptism of Christ and Leonardo was allowed to finish an angel in the left-hand corner. It was one of those moments in which the progress of a great thing—here, that of the art of Italy—presses hard on the happiness of an individual, through whose discouragement and decrease, humanity, in more

fortunate persons, comes a step nearer to its final success.

For beneath the cheerful exterior of the mere well-paid craftsman, chasing brooches for the copes of *Santa Maria Novella*, or twisting metal screens for the tombs of the Medici, lay the ambitious desire to expand the destiny of Italian art by a larger knowledge and insight into things, a purpose in art not unlike Leonardo's still unconscious purpose; and often, in the modelling of drapery, or of a lifted arm, or of hair cast back from the face, there came to him something of the freer manner and richer humanity of a later age. But in this *Baptism* the pupil had surpassed the master; and Verrocchio turned away as one stunned, and as if his sweet earlier work must thereafter be distasteful to him, from the bright animated angel of Leonardo's hand.

The angel may still be seen in Florence, a space of sunlight in the cold, laboured old picture; but the legend is true only in sentiment, for painting had always been the art by which Verrocchio set least store. And as in a sense he anticipates Leonardo, so to the last Leonardo recalls the studio of Verrocchio, in the love of beautiful toys, such as the vessel of water for a mirror, and lovely needlework about the implicated hands in the *Modesty and Vanity*, and of reliefs, like those cameos which in the *Virgin of the Balances* hang all round the girdle of Saint Michael, and of bright variegated stones, such as the agates in the *Saint Anne*, and in a hieratic preciseness and grace, as of a sanctuary swept and garnished. Amid all the cunning and intricacy of his Lombard manner this never left him. Much of it there must have been in that lost picture of *Paradise*, which he prepared as a cartoon for tapestry, to be woven in the looms of Flanders. It was the perfection of the older Florentine style of miniature-painting, with patient putting of each leaf upon the trees and each flower in the grass, where the first man and woman were standing.

And because it was the perfection of that style, it awoke in Leonardo some seed of discontent which lay in the secret places of his nature. For the way to perfection is through a series of disgusts; and this picture—all that he had done so far in his life at Florence—was after all in the old slight manner. His art, if it was to be something in the world, must be weighted with more of the meaning of nature and purpose of humanity. Nature was "the true mistress of higher intelligences". He plunged, then, into the study of nature. And in doing this he followed the manner of the older students; he brooded over the hidden virtues of plants and crystals, the lines traced by the stars as they moved in the sky, over the correspondences which exist between the different orders of living things, through which, to eyes opened, they interpret each other; and for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice, silent for other men.

He learned here the art of going deep, of tracking the sources of expression to their subtlest retreats, the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled. He did not at once or entirely desert his art; only he was no longer the cheerful, objective painter, through whose soul, as through clear glass, the bright figures of Florentine life, only made a little mellowed and more pensive by the transit, passed on to the white wall. He wasted many days in curious tricks of design, seeming to lose himself in the spinning of intricate devices of line and colour. He was smitten with a love of the impossible—the perforation of mountains, changing the course of rivers, raising great buildings, such as the church of *San Giovanni*, in the air; all those feats for the performance of which natural magic professed to have the key. Later writers, indeed, see in these efforts an anticipation of modern mechanics; in him they were rather dreams, thrown off by the overwrought and labouring brain. Two ideas were especially confirmed in him, as reflexes of things that had touched his brain in childhood beyond the depth of other impressions—the smiling of women and the motion of great waters.

And in such studies some interfusion of the extremes of beauty and terror shaped itself, as an image that might be seen and touched, in the mind of this gracious youth, so fixed that for the rest of his life it never left him. As if catching glimpses of it in the strange eyes or hair of chance people, he would follow such about the streets of Florence till the sun went down, of whom many sketches of his remain. Some of these are full of a curious beauty, that remote beauty which may be apprehended only by those who have sought it carefully; who, starting with acknowledged types of beauty, have refined as far upon these, as these refine upon the world of common forms. But mingled inextricably with this there is an element of mockery also; so that, whether in sorrow or scorn, he caricatures Dante even. Legions of grotesques sweep under his hand; for has not nature too her grotesques—the rent rock, the distorting lights of evening on lonely roads, the unveiled structure of man in the embryo, or the skeleton?

All these swarming fancies unite in the *Medusa* of the *Uffizi*. Vasari's story of an earlier Medusa, painted on a wooden shield is perhaps an invention; and yet, properly told, has more of the air of truth about it than anything else in the whole legend. For its real subject is not the serious work of a man, but the experiment of a child. The lizards and glow-worms and other strange small creatures which haunt an Italian vineyard bring before one the whole picture of a child's life in a Tuscan dwelling—half castle, half farm—and are as true to nature as the pretended astonishment of the father for whom the boy has

prepared a surprise. It was not in play that he painted that other Medusa, the one great picture which he left behind him in Florence. The subject has been treated in various ways; Leonardo alone cuts to its centre; he alone realises it as the head of a corpse, exercising its powers through all the circumstances of death. What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch its exquisitely finished beauty. About the dainty lines of the cheek the bat flits unheeded. The delicate snakes seem literally strangling each other in terrified struggle to escape from the Medusa brain. The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features; features singularly massive and grand, as we catch them inverted, in a dexterous foreshortening, crown foremost, like a great calm stone against which the wave of serpents breaks.

The science of that age was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas, seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences. Later writers, thinking only of the well-ordered treatise on painting which a Frenchman, Raffaele du Fresne, a hundred years afterwards, compiled from Leonardo's bewildered manuscripts, written strangely, as his manner was, from right to left, have imagined a rigid order in his inquiries. But this rigid order would have been little in accordance with the restlessness of his character; and if we think of him as the mere reasoner who subjects design to anatomy and composition to mathematical rules, we shall hardly have that impression which those around Leonardo received from him. Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying, by a strange variation of the alchemist's dream, to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but of giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting, he seemed to them rather the sorcerer or the magician, possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key. What his philosophy seems to have been most like is that of Paracelsus or Cardan; and much of the spirit of the older alchemy still hangs about it, with its confidence in short cuts and odd byways to knowledge. To him philosophy was to be something giving strange swiftness and double sight, divining the sources of springs beneath the earth or of expression beneath the human countenance, clairvoyant of occult gilts in common or uncommon things, in the reed at the brook-side, or the star which draws near to us but once in a century. How, in this way, the clear purpose was overclouded, the fine chaser's hand perplexed, we but dimly see; the mystery which at no point quite lifts from Leonardo's life is deepest here. But it is certain that at one period of his life he had almost ceased to be an artist.

The year 1483—the year of the birth of Raphael and the thirty-first of Leonardo's life—is fixed as the date of his visit to Milan by the letter in which he recommends himself to Ludovico Sforza, and offers to tell him, for a price, strange secrets in the art of war. It was that Sforza who murdered his young nephew by slow poison, yet was so susceptible of religious impressions that he blended mere earthly passion with a sort of religious sentimentalism, and who took for his device the mulberry-tree—symbol, in its long delay and sudden yielding of flowers and fruit together, of a wisdom which economises all forces for an opportunity of sudden and sure effect. The fame of Leonardo had gone before him, and he was to model a colossal statue of Francesco, the first Duke of Milan. As for Leonardo himself, he came not as an artist at all, or careful of the fame of one; but as a player on the harp, a strange harp of silver of his own construction, shaped in some curious likeness to a horse's skull. The capricious spirit of Ludovico was susceptible also to the power of music, and Leonardo's nature had a kind of spell in it. Fascination is always the word descriptive of him. No portrait of his youth remains; but all tends to make us believe that up to this time some charm of voice and aspect, strong enough to balance the disadvantage of his birth, had played about him. His physical strength was great; it was said that he could bend a horse-shoe like a coil of lead.

The *Duomo*, work of artists from beyond the Alps, so fantastic to the eye of a Florentine used to the mellow, unbroken surfaces of Giotto and Arnolfo, was then in all its freshness; and below, in the streets of Milan, moved a people as fantastic, changeful, and dreamlike. To Leonardo least of all men could there be anything poisonous in the exotic flowers of sentiment which grew there. It was a life of brilliant sins and exquisite amusements: Leonardo became a celebrated designer of pageants; and it suited the quality of his genius, composed, in almost equal parts, of curiosity and the desire of beauty, to take things as they came.

Curiosity and the desire of beauty—these are the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius; curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace.

The movement of the fifteenth century was twofold, partly the Renaissance, partly also the coming of what is called the "modern spirit", with its realism, its appeal to experience. It comprehended a return to antiquity, and a return to nature. Raphael represents the return to antiquity, and Leonardo the return to nature. In this return to nature, he was seeking to satisfy a boundless curiosity by her perpetual surprises, a microscopic sense of finish by her *finesse*, or delicacy

of operation, that *subtilitas nature* which Bacon notices. So we find him often in intimate relations with men of science,—with Fra Luca Paccioli the mathematician, and the anatomist Marc Antonio della Torre. His observations and experiments fill thirteen volumes of manuscript; and those who can judge describe him as anticipating long before, by rapid intuition, the later ideas of science. He explained the obscure light of the unilluminated part of the moon, knew that the sea had once covered the mountains which contain shells, and of the gathering of the equatorial waters above the polar.

He who thus penetrated into the most secret parts of nature preferred always the more to the less remote, what, seeming exceptional, was an instance of law more refined, the construction about things of a peculiar atmosphere and mixed lights. He paints flowers with such curious felicity that different writers have attributed to him a fondness for particular flowers, as Clement the cyclamen, and Rio the jasmin; while, at Venice, there is a stray leaf from his portfolio dotted all over with studies of violets and the wild rose. In him first appears the taste for what is *bizarre* or *recherché* in landscape; hollow places full of the green shadow of bituminous rocks, ridged reefs of trap-rock which cut the water into quaint sheets of light,—their exact antitype is in our own western seas; all the solemn effects of moving water. You may follow it springing from its distant source among the rocks on the heath of the *Madonna of the Balances*, passing, as a little fall, into the treacherous calm of the *Madonna of the Lake*, as a goodly river next, below the cliffs of the *Madonna of the Rocks*, washing the white walls of its distant villages, stealing out in a network of divided streams in *La Gioconda* to the seashore of the *Saint Anne*—that delicate place, where the wind passes like the hand of some fine etcher over the surface, and the untorn shells are lying thick upon the sand, and the tops of the rocks, to which the waves never rise, are green with grass, grown fine as hair. It is the landscape, not of dreams or of fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of *finesse*. Through Leonardo's strange veil of sight things reach him so; in no ordinary night or day, but as in faint light of eclipse, or in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water.

And not into nature only; but he plunged also into human personality, and became above all a painter of portraits; faces of a modelling more skilful than has been seen before or since, embodied with a reality which almost amounts to illusion, on the dark air. To take a character as it was, and delicately sound its stops, suited one so curious in observation, curious in invention. He painted thus the portraits of Ludovico's mistresses, Lucretia Crivelli and Cecilia Galerani the

poetess, of Ludovico himself, and the Duchess Beatrice. The portrait of Cecilia Galerani is lost, but that of Lucretia Crivelli has been identified with *La Belle Feronière* of the Louvre, and Ludovico's pale, anxious face still remains in the Ambrosian library. Opposite is the portrait of Beatrice d'Este, in whom Leonardo seems to have caught some presentiment of early death, painting her precise and grave, full of the refinement of the dead, in sad earth-coloured raiment, set with pale stones.

Sometimes this curiosity came in conflict with the desire of beauty; it tended to make him go too far below that outside of things in which art really begins and ends. This struggle between the reason and its ideas, and the senses, the desire of beauty, is the key to Leonardo's life at Milan—his restlessness, his endless re-touchings, his odd experiments with colour. How much must he leave unfinished, how much recommence! His problem was the transmutation of ideas into images. What he had attained so far had been the mastery of that earlier Florentine style, with its naïve and limited sensuousness. Now he was to entertain in this narrow medium those divinations of a humanity too wide for it, that larger vision of the opening world, which is only not too much for the great, irregular art of Shakespeare; and everywhere the effort is visible in the work of his hands. This agitation, this perpetual delay, give him an air of weariness and *ennui*. To others he seems to be aiming at an impossible effect, to do something that art, that painting, can never do. Often the expression of physical beauty at this or that point seems strained and marred in the effort, as in those heavy German foreheads—too heavy and German for perfect beauty.

For there was a touch of Germany in that genius which, as Goethe said, had "thought itself weary"—*müde sich gedacht*. What an anticipation of modern Germany, for instance, in that debate on the question whether sculpture or painting is the nobler art!* But there is this difference between him and the German, that, with all that curious science, the German would have thought nothing more was needed. The name of Goethe himself reminds one how great for the artist may be the danger of over-much science; how Goethe, who, in the *Elective Affinities* and the first part of *Faust*, does transmute ideas into images, who wrought many such transmutations, did not invariably find the spell-word, and in the second part of *Faust* presents us with a mass of science which has almost no artistic character at all. But Leonardo will never work till the happy moment comes—that moment of *bien-être*, which to imaginative men is a moment of invention.

* How princely, how characteristic of Leonardo, the answer, *Quanto più, un' arte porta seco fatica di corpo, tanto più è vile!* [W.P.]

On this he waits with a perfect patience; other moments are but a preparation, or after-taste of it. Few men distinguish between them as jealously as he. Hence so many flaws even in the choicest work. But for Leonardo the distinction is absolute, and, in the moment of *bien-être*, the alchemy complete: the idea is stricken into colour and imagery: a cloudy mysticism is refined to a subdued and graceful mystery, and painting pleases the eye while it satisfies the soul.

This curious beauty is seen above all in his drawings, and in these chiefly in the abstract grace of the bounding lines. Let us take some of these drawings, and pause over them awhile; and, first, one of those at Florence—the heads of a woman and a little child, set side by side, but each in its own separate frame. First of all, there is much pathos in the reappearance, in the fuller curves of the face of the child, of the sharper, more chastened lines of the worn and older face, which leaves no doubt that the heads are those of a little child and its mother. A feeling for maternity is indeed always characteristic of Leonardo; and this feeling is further indicated here by the half-humorous pathos of the diminutive, rounded shoulders of the child. You may note a like pathetic power in drawings of a young man, seated in a stooping posture, his face in his hands, as in sorrow; of a slave sitting in an uneasy inclined attitude, in some brief interval of rest; of a small Madonna and Child, peeping sideways in half-reassured terror, as a mighty griffin with batlike wings, one of Leonardo's finest *inventions*, descends suddenly from the air to snatch up a great wild beast wandering near them. But note in these, as that which especially belongs to art, the contour of the young man's hair, the poise of the slave's arm above his head, and the curves of the head of the child, following the little skull within, thin and fine as some sea-shell worn by the wind.

Take again another head, still more full of sentiment, but of a different kind, a little drawing in red chalk which every one will remember who has examined at all carefully the drawings by old masters at the Louvre. It is a face of doubtful sex, set in the shadow of its own hair, the cheek-line in high light against it, with something voluptuous and full in the eyelids and the lips. Another drawing might pass for the same face in childhood, with parched and feverish lips, but much sweetness in the loose, short-waisted childish dress, with necklace and *bulla*, and in the daintily bound hair. We might take the thread of suggestion which these two drawings offer, when thus set side by side, and, following it through the drawings at Florence, Venice, and Milan, construct a sort of series, illustrating better than anything else Leonardo's type of womanly beauty. Daughters of Herodias, with their fantastic head-dresses knotted and folded so

strangely to leave the dainty oval of the face disengaged, they are not of the Christian family, or of Raphael's. They are the clairvoyants, through whom, as through delicate instruments, one becomes aware of the subtler forces of nature, and the modes of their action, all that is magnetic in it, all those finer conditions wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual, where only the finer nerve and the keener touch can follow. It is as if in certain significant examples we actually saw those forces at their work on human flesh. Nervous, electric, faint always with some inexplicable faintness, these people seem to be subject to exceptional conditions, to feel powers at work in the common air unfelt by others, to become, as it were, the receptacle of them, and pass them on to us in a chain of secret influences.

But among the more youthful heads there is one at Florence which Love chooses for its own—the head of a young man, which may well be the likeness of Andrea Salaino, beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair—*belli capelli ricci e inanellati*—and afterwards his favourite pupil and servant. Of all the interests in living men and women which may have filled his life at Milan, this attachment alone is recorded. And in return Salaino identified himself so entirely with Leonardo, that the picture of *Saint Anne*, in the Louvre, has been attributed to him. It illustrates Leonardo's usual choice of pupils, men of some natural charm of person or intercourse like Salaino, or men of birth and princely habits of life like Francesco Melzi—men with just enough genius to be capable of initiation into his secret, for the sake of which they were ready to efface their own individuality. Among them, retiring often to the villa of the Melzi at *Canonica al Vaprio*, he worked at his fugitive manuscripts and sketches, working for the present hour, and for a few only, perhaps chiefly for himself. Other artists have been as careless of present or future applause, in self-forgetfulness, or because they set moral or political ends above the ends of art; but in him this solitary culture of beauty seems to have hung upon a kind of self-love, and a carelessness in the work of art of all but art itself. Out of the secret places of a unique temperament he brought strange blossoms and fruits hitherto unknown; and for him, the novel impression conveyed, the exquisite effect woven, counted as an end in itself—a perfect end.

And these pupils of his acquired his manner so thoroughly, that though the number of Leonardo's authentic works is very small indeed, there is a multitude of other men's pictures through which we undoubtedly see him, and come very near to his genius. Sometimes, as in the little picture of the *Madonna of the Balances*, in which, from the bosom of His mother, Christ weighs the pebbles of the brook against

the sins of men, we have a hand, rough enough by contrast, working upon some fine hint or sketch of his. Sometimes, as in the subjects of the *Daughter of Herodias* and the *Head of John the Baptist*, the lost originals have been re-echoed and varied upon again and again by Luini and others. At other times the original remains, but has been a mere theme or motive, a type of which the accessories might be modified or changed; and these variations have but brought out the more the purpose, or expression of the original. It is so with the so-called *Saint John the Baptist* of the Louvre—one of the few naked figures Leonardo painted—whose delicate brown flesh and woman's hair no one would go out into the wilderness to seek, and whose treacherous smile would have us understand something far beyond the outward gesture or circumstance. But the long, reedlike cross in the hand, which suggests Saint John the Baptist, becomes faint in a copy at the Ambrosian Library, and disappears altogether in another version, in the *Palazzo Rosso* at Genoa. Returning from the latter to the original, we are no longer surprised by Saint John's strange likeness to the *Bacchus* which hangs near it, and which set Théophile Gautier thinking of Heine's notion of decayed gods, who, to maintain themselves, after the fall of paganism, took employment in the new religion. We recognise one of those symbolical inventions in which the ostensible subject is used, not as matter for definite pictorial realisation, but as the starting-point of a train of sentiment, subtle and vague as a piece of music. No one ever ruled over the mere *subject* in hand more entirely than Leonardo, or bent it more dexterously to purely artistic ends. And so it comes to pass that though he handles sacred subjects continually, he is the most profane of painters; the given person or subject, Saint John in the Desert, or the Virgin on the knees of Saint Anne, is often merely the pretext for a kind of work which carries one altogether beyond the range of its conventional associations.

About the *Last Supper*, its decay and restorations, a whole literature has risen up, Goethe's pensive sketch of its sad fortunes being perhaps the best. The death in childbirth of the Duchess Beatrice was followed in Ludovico by one of those paroxysms of religious feeling which in him were constitutional. The low, gloomy Dominican church of *Saint Mary of the Graces* had been the favourite oratory of Beatrice. She had spent her last days there, full of sinister presentiments; at last it had been almost necessary to remove her from it by force; and now it was here that mass was said a hundred times a day for her repose. On the damp wall of the refectory, oozing with mineral salts, Leonardo painted the *Last Supper*. Effective anecdotes were told about it, his retouchings and delays. They show him refusing to work

except at the moment of invention, scornful of any one who supposed that art could be a work of mere industry and rule, often coming the whole length of Milan to give a single touch. He painted it, not in fresco, where all must be *impromptu*, but in oils, the new method which he had been one of the first to welcome, because it allowed of so many after-thoughts, so refined a working out of perfection. It turned out that on a plastered wall no process could have been less durable. Within fifty years it had fallen into decay. And now we have to turn back to Leonardo's own studies, above all to one drawing of the central head at the *Brera*, which, in a union of tenderness and severity in the face-lines, reminds one of the monumental work of Mino da Fiesole, to trace it as it was.

Here was another effort to lift a given subject out of the range of its traditional associations. Strange, after all the mystic developments of the middle age, was the effort to see the Eucharist, not as the pale Host of the altar, but as one taking leave of his friends. Five years afterwards the young Raphael, at Florence, painted it with sweet and solemn effect in the refectory of Saint Onofrio; but still with all the mystical unreality of the school of Perugino. Vasari pretends that the central head was never finished. But finished or unfinished, or owing part of its effect to a mellowing decay, the head of Jesus does but consummate the sentiment of the whole company—ghosts through which you see the wall, faint as the shadows of the leaves upon the wall on autumn afternoons. This figure is but the faintest, the most spectral of them all.

The *Last Supper* was finished in 1497; in 1498 the French entered Milan, and whether or not the Gascon bowmen used it as a mark for their arrows, the model of Francesco Sforza certainly did not survive. What, in that age, such work was capable of being—of what nobility, amid what racy truthfulness to fact—we may judge from the bronze statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni on horseback, modelled by Leonardo's master, Verrocchio (he died of grief, it was said, because, the mould accidentally failing, he was unable to complete it), still standing in the *piazza* of Saint John and Saint Paul at Venice. Some traces of the thing may remain in certain of Leonardo's drawings, and perhaps also, by a singular circumstance, in a far-off town of France. For Ludovico became a prisoner, and ended his days at Loches in Touraine. After many years of captivity in the dungeons below, where all seems sick with barbarous feudal memories, he was allowed at last, it is said, to breathe fresher air for awhile in one of the rooms of the great tower still shown, its walls covered with strange painted arabesques, ascribed by tradition to his hand, amused a little, in this way, through the tedious years. In those vast helmets and

human faces and pieces of armour, among which, in great letters, the motto *Infelix Sum* is woven in and out, it is perhaps not too fanciful to see the fruit of a wistful after-dreaming over all Leonardo's sundry experiments on the armed figure of the great duke, which had occupied the two so much during the days of their good fortune at Milan.

The remaining years of Leonardo's life are more or less years of wandering. From his brilliant life at court he had saved nothing, and he returned to Florence a poor man. Perhaps necessity kept his spirit excited: the next four years are one prolonged rapture or ecstasy of invention. He painted now the pictures of the Louvre, his most authentic works, which came there straight from the cabinet of Francis the First, at Fontainebleau. One picture of his, the *Saint Anne*—not the *Saint Anne* of the Louvre, but a simple cartoon, now in London—revived for a moment a sort of appreciation more common in an earlier time, when good pictures had still seemed miraculous. For two days a crowd of people of all qualities passed in naïve excitement through the chamber where it hung, and gave Leonardo a taste of the "triumph" of Cimabue. But his work was less with the saints than with the living women of Florence. For he lived still in the polished society that he loved, and in the houses of Florence, left perhaps a little subject to light thoughts by the death of Savonarola—the latest gossip (1869) is of an undraped Monna Lisa, found in some out-of-the-way corner of the late *Orléans* collection—he saw Ginevra di Benci, and Lisa, the young third wife of Francesco del Giocondo. As we have seen him using incidents of sacred story, not for their own sake, or as mere subjects for pictorial realisation, but as a cryptic language for fancies all his own, so now he found a vent for his thought in taking one of these languid women, and raising her, as Leda or Pomona, as Modesty or Vanity, to the seventh heaven of symbolical expression.

La Gioconda is, in the truest sense, Leonardo's masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the *Melancholia* of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least.* As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that

* Yet for Vasari there was some further magic of crimson in the lips and cheeks, lost for us. [W.P.]

Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principal, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo's brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in *Il Giocondo's* house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come", and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world had etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

During these years at Florence Leonardo's history is the history of his art; for himself, he is lost in the bright cloud of it. The outward history begins again in 1502, with a wild journey through central Italy, which he makes as the chief engineer of Cæsar Borgia. The biographer, putting together the stray jottings of his manuscripts, may follow him through every day of it, up the strange tower of Siena, elastic like a bent bow, down to the seashore at Piombino, each place appearing as fitfully as in a fever dream.

One other great work was left for him to do, a work all trace of which soon vanished. *The Battle of the Standard*, in which he had Michelangelo for his rival. The citizens of Florence, desiring to decorate the walls of the great council-chamber, had offered the work for competition, and any subject might be chosen from the Florentine wars of the fifteenth century. Michelangelo chose for his cartoon an incident of the war with Pisa, in which the Florentine soldiers, bathing in the Arno, are surprised by the sound of trumpets, and run to arms. His design has reached us only in an old engraving, which helps us less perhaps than our remembrance of the background of his *Holy Family* in the *Uffizi* to imagine in what superhuman form, such as might have beguiled the heart of an earlier world, those figures ascended out of the water. Leonardo chose an incident from the battle of Anghiari, in which two parties of soldiers fight for a standard. Like Michelangelo's, his cartoon is lost, and has come to us only in sketches, and in a fragment of Rubens. Through the accounts given we may discern some lust of terrible things in it, so that even the horses tore each other with their teeth. And yet one fragment of it, in a drawing of his at Florence, is far different—a waving field of lovely armour, the chased edgings running like lines of sunlight from side to side. Michelangelo was twenty-seven years old; Leonardo more than fifty; and Raphael, then nineteen years of age, visiting Florence for the first time, came and watched them as they worked.

We catch a glimpse of Leonardo again, at Rome in 1514, surrounded by his mirrors and vials and furnaces, making strange toys that seemed alive of wax and quicksilver. The hesitation which had haunted him all through life, and made him like one under a spell, was upon him now with double force. No one had ever carried political indifferentism farther; it had always been his philosophy to "fly before the storm"; he is for the Sforzas, or against them, as the tide of their fortune turns. Yet now, in the political society of Rome, he came to be suspected of secret French sympathies. It paralysed him to find himself among enemies; and he turned wholly to France, which had long courted him.

France was about to become an Italy more Italian than Italy itself. Francis the First, like Lewis the Twelfth before him, was attracted by

the *finesse* of Leonardo's work; *La Gioconda* was already in his cabinet, and he offered Leonardo the little *Château de Clou*, with its vineyards and meadows, in the pleasant valley of the Masse, just outside the walls of the town of Amboise, where, especially in the hunting season, the court then frequently resided. *A Monsieur Lyonard, peinteur du Roy pour Amboyse*—so the letter of Francis the First is headed. It opens a prospect, one of the most interesting in the history of art, where, in a peculiarly blent atmosphere, Italian art dies away as a French exotic.

Two questions remain, after much busy antiquarianism, concerning Leonardo's death—the question of the exact form of his religion, and the question whether Francis the First was present at the time. They are of about equally little importance in the estimate of Leonardo's genius. The directions in his will concerning the thirty masses and the great candles for the church of Saint Florentin are things of course, their real purpose being immediate and practical; and on no theory of religion could these hurried offices be of much consequence. We forget them in speculating how one who had been always so desirous of beauty, but desired it always in such precise and definite forms, as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land, and experienced the last curiosity.

THE SCHOOL OF GIORGIONE

It is the mistake of much popular criticism to regard poetry, music, and painting—all the various products of art—as but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colour, in painting; of sound, in music; of rhythmical words, in poetry. In this way, the sensuous element in art, and with it almost everything in art that is essentially artistic, is made a matter of indifference; and a clear apprehension of the opposite principle—that the sensuous material of each art brings with it a special phase or quality of beauty, untranslatable into the forms of any other, an order of impressions distinct in kind—is the beginning of all true æsthetic criticism. For, as art addresses not pure sense, still less the pure intellect, but the “imaginative reason” through the senses, there are differences of kind in æsthetic beauty, corresponding to the differences in kind of the gifts of sense themselves. Each art, therefore, having its own peculiar and untranslatable sensuous charm, has its own special mode of reaching the imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material. One of the functions of æsthetic criticism is to define these limitations; to estimate the degree of which a given work of art fulfils its responsibilities to its special material; to note in a picture that true pictorial charm, which is neither a mere poetical thought or sentiment, on the one hand, nor a mere result of communicable technical skill in colour or design, on the other; to define in a poem that true poetical quality, which is neither descriptive nor meditative merely, but comes of an inventive handling of rhythmical language, the element of song in the singing; to note in music the musical charm, that essential music, which presents no words, no matter of sentiment or thought, separable from the special form in which it is conveyed to use.

To such a philosophy of the variations of the beautiful, Lessing's analysis of the spheres of sculpture and poetry, in the *Laocoon*, was an important contribution. But a true appreciation of these things is possible only in the light of a whole system of such art-critisistries. Now painting is the art in the criticism of which this truth most needs enforcing, for it is in popular judgments on pictures that the false generalisation of all art into forms of poetry is most prevalent. To suppose that all is mere technical acquirement in delineation or touch, working through and addressing itself to the intelligence, on the one

side, or a merely poetical, or what may be called literary interest, addressed also to the pure intelligence, on the other:—this is the way of most spectators, and of many critics, who have never caught sight all the time of that true pictorial quality which lies between, unique pledge, as it is, of the possession of the pictorial gift, that inventive or creative handling of pure line and colour, which, as almost always in Dutch painting, as often also in the works of Titian or Veronese, is quite independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject it accompanies. It is the *drawing*—the design projected from the peculiar pictorial temperament or constitution, in which, while it may possibly be ignorant of true anatomical proportions, all things whatever, all poetry, all ideas however abstract or obscure, float up as visible scene or image: it is the *colouring*—that weaving of light as of just perceptible gold threads, through the dress, the flesh, the atmosphere, in Titian's *Lace-girl*, that staining of the whole fabric of the thing with a new, delightful physical quality. This *drawing*, then—the arabesque traced in the air by Tintoret's flying figures, by Titian's forest branches; this *colouring*—the magic conditions of light and hue in the atmosphere of Titian's *Lace-girl*, or Rubens's *Descent from the Cross*:—these essential pictorial qualities must first of all delight the sense, delight it as directly and sensuously as a fragment of Venetian glass; and through this delight alone become the vehicle of whatever poetry or science may lie beyond them in the intention of the composer. In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight and shadow for a few moments on the wall or floor: is itself, in truth, a space of such fallen light, caught as the colours are in an Eastern carpet, but refined upon, and dealt with more subtly and exquisitely than by nature itself. And this primary and essential condition fulfilled, we may trace the coming of poetry into painting, by fine gradations upwards; from Japanese fan-painting, for instance, where we get, first, only abstract colour; then, just a little interfused sense of the poetry of flowers; then, sometimes, perfect flower-painting; and so, onwards, until in Titian we have, as his poetry in the *Ariadne*, so actually a touch of true childlike humour in the diminutive, quaint figure with its silk gown, which ascends the temple stairs, in his picture of the *Presentation of the Virgin*, at Venice.

But although each art has thus its own specific order of impressions, and an untranslatable charm, while a just apprehension of the ultimate differences of the arts is the beginning of æsthetic criticism; yet it is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term an *Anders-streben*—a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed

to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces.

Thus some of the most delightful music seems to be always approaching to figure, to pictorial definition. Architecture, again, though it has its own laws—laws esoteric enough, as the true architect knows only too well—yet sometimes aims at fulfilling the conditions of a picture, as in the *Arena* chapel; or of sculpture, as in the flawless unity of Giotto's tower at Florence; and often finds a true poetry, as in those strangely twisted staircases of the *châteaux* of the country of the Loire, as if it were intended that among their odd turnings the actors in a theatrical mode of life might pass each other unseen; there being a poetry also of memory and of the mere effect of time, by which architecture often profits greatly. Thus, again, sculpture aspires out of the hard limitation of pure form towards colour, or its equivalent; poetry also, in many ways, finding guidance from the other arts, the analogy between a Greek tragedy and a work of Greek sculpture, between a sonnet and a relief, of French poetry generally with the art of engraving, being more than mere figures of speech; and all the arts in common aspiring towards the principle of music; music being the typical, or ideally consummate art, the object of the great *Andersstreben* of all art, of all that is artistic, or partakes of artistic qualities.

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation—that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape—should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.

This abstract language becomes clear enough, if we think of actual examples. In an actual landscape we see a long white road, lost suddenly on the hill-verge. That is the matter of one of the etchings of M. Alphonse Legros: only, in this etching, it is informed by an indwelling solemnity of expression, seen upon it or half-seen, within the limits of an exceptional moment, or caught from his own mood perhaps, but which he maintains as the very essence of the thing, throughout his work. Sometimes a momentary tint of stormy light may invest a homely or too familiar scene with a character which might well have been drawn from the deep places of the imagination. Then we might say that this particular effect of light, this sudden inweaving

of gold thread through the texture of the haystack, and the poplars, and the grass, gives the scene artistic qualities; that is it like a picture. And such tricks of circumstance are commonest in landscape which has little salient character of its own; because, in such scenery, all the material details are so easily absorbed by that informing expression of passing light, and elevated, throughout their whole extent, to a new and delightful effect by it. And hence the superiority, for most conditions of the picturesque, of a river-side in France to a Swiss valley, because, on the French river-side, mere topography, the simple material, counts for so little, and, all being very pure, untouched, and tranquil in itself, mere light and shade have such easy work in modulating it to one dominant tone. The Venetian landscape, on the other hand, has in its material conditions much which is hard, or harshly definite; but the masters of the Venetian school have shown themselves little burdened by them. Of its Alpine background they retain certain abstracted elements only, of cool colour and tranquillising line; and they use its actual details, the brown windy turrets, the straw-coloured fields, the forest arabesques, but as the notes of a music which duly accompanies the presence of their men and women, presenting us with the spirit or essence only of a certain sort of landscape—a country of the pure reason or half-imaginative memory.

Poetry, again, works with words addressed in the first instance to the pure intelligence; and it deals, most often, with a definite subject or situation. Sometimes it may find a noble and quite legitimate function in the conveyance of moral or political aspiration, as often in the poetry of Victor Hugo. In such instances it is easy enough for the understanding to distinguish between the matter and the form, however much the matter, the subject, the element which is addressed to the mere intelligence, has been penetrated by the informing, artistic spirit. But the ideal types of poetry are those in which this distinction is reduced to its *minimum*; so that lyrical poetry, precisely because in it we are least able to detach the matter from the form, without a deduction of something from that matter itself, is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often appears to depend, in part, on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the meaning reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding, as in some of the most imaginative compositions of William Blake, and often in Shakespeare's songs, as pre-eminently in that song of Mariana's page in *Measure for Measure*, in which the kindling force and poetry of the whole play seems to pass for a moment into an actual strain of music.

And this principle holds good of all things that partake in any degree of artistic qualities, of the furniture of our houses, and of dress,

for instance, of life itself, of gesture and speech, and the details of daily intercourse; there also, for the wise, being susceptible of a suavity and charm, caught from the way in which they are done, which gives them a worth in themselves. Herein, again, lies what is valuable and justly attractive, in what is called the fashion of a time, which elevates the trivialities of speech, and manner, and dress, into "ends in themselves", and gives them a mysterious grace and attractiveness in the doing of them.

Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or the ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason", that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

It is the art of music which most completely realises this artistic ideal, this perfect identification of matter and form. In its consummate moments, the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire. In music, then, rather than in poetry, is to be found the true type or measure of perfected art. Therefore, although each art has its incommunicable element, its untranslatable order of impressions, its unique mode of reaching the "imaginative reason", yet the arts may be represented as continually struggling after the law or principle of music, to a condition which music alone completely realises; and one of the chief functions of æsthetic criticism, dealing with the products of art, new or old, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches, in this sense, to musical law.

By no school of painters have the necessary limitations of the art of painting been so unerringly though instinctively apprehended, and the essence of what is pictorial in a picture so justly conceived, as by the school of Venice; and the train of thought suggested in what has been now said is, perhaps, a not unfitting introduction to a few pages about Giorgione who, though much has been taken by recent criticism from what was reputed to be his work, yet, more entirely than any other painter, sums up, in what we know of himself and his art, the spirit of the Venetian school.

The beginnings of Venetian painting link themselves to the last, stiff, half-barbaric splendours of Byzantine decoration, and are but the introduction into the crust of marble and gold on the walls of the *Duomo* of Murano, or of Saint Mark's, of a little more of human expression. And throughout the course of its later development, always subordinate to architectural effect, the work of the Venetian school never escaped from the influence of its beginnings. Unassisted, and therefore unperplexed, by naturalism, religious mysticism, philosophical theories, it had no Giotto, no Angelico, no Botticelli. Exempt from the stress of thought and sentiment, which taxed so severely the resources of the generations of Florentine artists, those earlier Venetian painters, down to Carpaccio and the Bellini, seem never for a moment to have been so much as tempted to lose sight of the scope of their art in its strictness, or to forget that painting must be before all things decorative, a thing for the eye, a space of colour on the wall, only more dexterously blent than the marking of its precious stone or the chance interchange of sun and shade upon it:—this, to begin and end with; whatever higher matter of thought, or poetry, or religious reverie might play its part therein, between. At last, with final mastery of all the technical secrets of his art, and with somewhat more than “a spark of the divine fire” to his share, comes Giorgione. He is the inventor of *genre*, of those easily movable pictures which serve neither for uses of devotion, nor of allegorical or historic teaching—little groups of real men and women, amid congruous furniture or landscape—morsels of actual life, conversation or music or play, but refined upon or idealised, till they come to seem like glimpses of life from afar. Those spaces of more cunningly blent colour, obediently filling their places, hitherto, in a mere architectural scheme, Giorgione detaches from the wall. He frames them by the hands of some skilful carver, so that people may move them readily and take with them where they go, as one might a poem in manuscript, or a musical instrument, to be used, at will, as a means of self-education, stimulus or solace, coming like an animated presence, into one's cabinet, to enrich the air as with some choice aroma, and, like persons, live with us, for a day or a lifetime. Of all art such as this, art which has played so large a part in men's culture since that time, Giorgione is the initiator. Yet in him too that old Venetian clearness or justice, in the apprehension of the essential limitations of the pictorial art, is still undisturbed. While he interfuses his painted work with a high-strung sort of poetry, caught directly from a singularly rich and high-strung sort of life, yet in his selection of subject, or phase of subject, in the subordination of mere subject to pictorial design, to the main purpose of a picture, he is typical of that aspiration of all the arts towards music,

which I have endeavoured to explain,—towards the perfect identification of matter and form.

Born so near to Titian, though a little before him, that these two companion pupils of the aged Giovanni Bellini may almost be called contemporaries, Giorgione stands to Titian in something like the relationship of Sordello to Dante, in Browning's poem. Titian, when he leaves Bellini, becomes, in turn, the pupil of Giorgione. He lives in constant labour more than sixty years after Giorgione is in his grave; and with such fruit, that hardly one of the greater towns of Europe is without some fragment of his work. But the slightly older man, with his so limited actual product (what remains to us of it seeming, when narrowly explained, to reduce itself to almost one picture, like Sordello's one fragment of lovely verse), yet expresses, in elementary motive and principle, that spirit—itself the final acquisition of all the long endeavours of Venetian art—which Titian spreads over his whole life's activity.

And, as we might expect, something fabulous and illusive has always mingled itself in the brilliancy of Giorgione's fame. The exact relationship to him of many works—drawings, portraits, painted idylls—often fascinating enough, which in various collections went by his name, was from the first uncertain. Still, six or eight famous pictures at Dresden, Florence and the Louvre, were with no doubt attributed to him, and in these, if anywhere, something of the splendour of the old Venetian humanity seemed to have been preserved. But of those six or eight famous pictures it is now known that only one is certainly from Giorgione's hand. The accomplished science of the subject has come at last, and, as in other instances, has not made the past more real for us, but assured us only that we possess less of it than we seemed to possess. Much of the work on which Giorgione's immediate fame depended, work done for instantaneous effect, in all probability passed away almost within his own age, like the frescoes on the façade of the *fondaco dei Tedeschi* at Venice, some crimson traces of which, however, still give a strange additional touch of splendour to the scene of the *Rialto*. And then there is a barrier or borderland, a period about the middle of the sixteenth century, in passing through which the tradition miscarries, and the true outlines of Giorgione's work and person are obscured. It became fashionable for wealthy lovers of art, with no critical standard of authenticity, to collect so-called works of Giorgione, and a multitude of imitations came into circulation. And now, in the "new Vasari",* the great traditional reputation, woven with so profuse demand on men's admiration, has been scrutinised thread by thread; and what remains of the most vivid

* Crowe and Cavalcaselle: *History of Painting in North Italy*. [W.P.]

and stimulating of Venetian masters, a live flame, as it seemed, in those old shadowy times, has been reduced almost to a name by his most recent critics.

Yet enough remains to explain why the legend grew up above the name, why the name attached itself, in many instances, to the bravest work of other men. The *Concert* in the Pitti Palace, in which a monk, with cowl and tonsure, touches the keys of a harpsichord, while a clerk, placed behind him, grasps the handle of the viol, and a third, with cap and plume, seems to wait upon the true interval for beginning to sing, is undoubtedly Giorgione's. The outline of the lifted finger, the trace of the plume, the very threads of the fine linen, which fasten themselves on the memory, in the moment before they are lost altogether in that calm unearthly glow, the skill which has caught the waves of wandering sound, and fixed them for ever on the lips and hands—these are indeed the master's own; and the criticism which, while dismissing so much hitherto believed to be Giorgione's, has established the claims of this one picture, has left it among the most precious things in the world of art.

It is noticeable that the "distinction" of this *Concert*, its sustained evenness of perfection, alike in design, in execution, and in choice of personal type, becomes for the "new Vasari" the standard of Giorgione's genuine work. Finding here sufficient to explain his influence, and the true seal of mastery, its authors assign to Pellegrino da San Daniele the *Holy Family* in the Louvre, in consideration of certain points where it comes short of this standard. Such shortcoming, however, will hardly diminish the spectator's enjoyment of a singular charm of liquid air, with which the whole picture seems instinct, filling the eyes and lips, the very garments, of its sacred personages, with some wind-searched brightness and energy; of which fine air the blue peak, clearly defined in the distance is, as it were, the visible pledge. Similarly, another favourite picture in the Louvre, the subject of a delightful sonnet by a poet* whose own painted work often comes to mind as one ponders over these precious things—the *Fête Champêtre*, is assigned to an imitator of Sebastian del Piombo; and the *Tempest*, in the Academy at Venice, to Paris Bordone, or perhaps to "some advanced craftsman of the sixteenth century". From the gallery at Dresden, the *Knight embracing a Lady*, where the knight's broken gauntlets seem to mark some well-known pause in a story we would willingly hear the rest of, is conceded to "a Brescian hand", and *Jacob meeting Rachel* to a pupil of Palma. And then, whatever their charm, we are called on to give up the *Ordeal*, and the *Finding of Moses* with its jewel-like pools of water, perhaps to Bellini.

* Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Nor has the criticism, which thus so freely diminishes the number of his authentic works, added anything important to the well-known outline of the life and personality of the man: only, it has fixed one or two dates, one or two circumstances, a little more exactly. Giorgione was born before the year 1477, and spent his childhood at Castelfranco, where the last crags of the Venetian Alps break down romantically, with something of parklike grace, to the plain. A natural child of the family of the Barbarelli by a peasant-girl of Vedelago, he finds his way early into the circle of notable persons—people of courtesy. He is initiated into those differences of personal type, manner, and even of dress, which are best understood there—that “distinction” of the *Concert* of the Pitti Palace. Not far from his home lives Catherine of Cornara, formerly Queen of Cyprus; and, up in the towers which still remain, Tuzio Costanzo, the famous *condottiere*—a picturesque remnant of medieval manners, amid a civilisation rapidly changing. Giorgione paints their portraits; and when Tuzio’s son, Matteo, dies in early youth, adorns in his memory a chapel in the church of Castelfranco, painting on this occasion, perhaps, the altar-piece, foremost among his authentic works, still to be seen there, with the figure of the warrior-saint, Liberale, of which the original little study in oil, with the delicately gleaming, silver-grey armour, is one of the greater treasures of the National Gallery. In that figure, as in some other knightly personages attributed to him, people have supposed the likeness of the painter’s own presumably gracious presence. Thither, at last, he is himself brought home from Venice, early dead, but celebrated. It happened, about his thirty-fourth year, that in one of those parties at which he entertained his friends with music, he met a certain lady of whom he became greatly enamoured, and “they rejoiced greatly”, says Vasari, “the one and the other, in their loves”. And two quite different legends concerning it agree in this, that it was through this lady he came by his death; Ridolfi relating that, being robbed of her by one of his pupils, he died of grief at the double treason; Vasari, that she being secretly stricken of the plague, and he making his visits to her as usual, Giorgione took the sickness from her mortally, along with her kisses, and so briefly departed.

But, although the number of Giorgione’s extant works has been thus limited by recent criticism, all is not done when the real and the traditional elements in what concerns him have been discriminated; for, in what is connected with a great name, much that is not real is often very stimulating. For the æsthetic philosopher, therefore, over and above the real Giorgione and his authentic extant works, there remains the *Giorgionesque* also—an influence, a spirit or type in art, active in men so different as those to whom many of his supposed

works are really assignable. A veritable school, in fact, grew together out of all those fascinating works rightly or wrongly attributed to him; out of many copies from, or variations on him, by unknown or uncertain workmen, whose drawings and designs were, for various reasons, prized as his; out of the immediate impression he made upon his contemporaries, and with which he continued in men's minds; out of many traditions of subject and treatment, which really descend from him to our own time, and by retracing which we fill out the original image. Giorgione thus becomes a sort of impersonation of Venice itself, its projected reflex or ideal, all that was intense or desirable in it crystallising about the memory of this wonderful young man.

And now, finally, let me illustrate some of the characteristics of this *School of Giorgione*, as we may call it, which, for most of us, notwithstanding all that negative criticism of the "new Vasari", will still identify itself with those famous pictures at Florence, at Dresden and Paris. A certain artistic ideal is there defined for us—the conception of a peculiar aim and procedure in art, which we may understand as the *Giorgionesque*, wherever we find it, whether in Venetian work generally, or in work of our own time. Of this the *Concert*, that undoubted work of Giorgione in the Pitti Palace, is the typical instance, and a pledge authenticating the connexion of the school, and the spirit of the school, with the master.

I have spoken of a certain interpenetration of the matter or subject of a work of art with the form of it, a condition realised absolutely only in music, as the condition to which every form of art is perpetually aspiring. In the art of painting, the attainment of this ideal condition, this perfect interpenetration of the subject with the elements of colour and design, depends, of course, in great measure, on dexterous choice of that subject, or phase of subject; and such choice is one of the secrets of Giorgione's school. It is the school of *genre*, and employs itself mainly with "painted idylls", but, in the production of this pictorial poetry, exercises a wonderful tact in the selecting of such matter as lends itself most readily and entirely to pictorial form, to complete expression by drawing and colour. For although its productions are painted poems, they belong to a sort of poetry which tells itself without an articulated story. The master is pre-eminent for the resolution, the ease and quickness, with which he reproduces instantaneous motion—the lacing-on of armour, with the head bent back so stately—the fainting lady—the embrace, rapid as the kiss, caught with death itself from dying lips—some momentary conjunction of mirrors and polished armour and still water, by which all the sides of a solid image

are exhibited at once, solving that casuistical question whether painting can present an object as completely as sculpture. The sudden act, the rapid transition of thought, the passing expression—this he arrests with that vivacity which Vasari has attributed to him, *il fuoco Giorgionesco*, as he terms it. Now it is part of the ideality of the highest sort of dramatic poetry, that it presents us with a kind of profoundly significant and animated instants, a mere gesture, a look, a smile, perhaps—some brief and wholly concrete moment—into which, however, all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history, have condensed themselves, and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present. Such ideal instants the school of Giorgione selects, with its admirable tact, from that feverish, tumultuously coloured world of the old citizens of Venice—exquisite pauses in time, in which, arrested thus, we seem to be spectators of all the fulness of existence, and which are like some consummate extract or quintessence of life.

It is to the law or condition of music, as I said, that all art like this is really aspiring; and, in the school of Giorgione, the perfect moments of music itself, the making or hearing of music, song or its accompaniment, are themselves prominent as subjects. On that background of the silence of Venice, so impressive to the modern visitor, the world of Italian music was then forming. In choice of subject, as in all besides, the *Concert* of the Pitti Palace is typical of everything that Giorgione, himself an admirable musician, touched with his influence. In sketch or finished picture, in various collections, we may follow it through many intricate variations—men fainting at music; music at the pool-side while people fish, or mingled with the sound of the pitcher in the well, or heard across running water, or among the flocks; the tuning of instruments; people with intent faces, as if listening, like those described by Plato in an ingenious passage of the *Republic*, to detect the smallest interval of musical sound, the smallest undulation in the air, or feeling for music in thought on a stringless instrument, ear and finger refining themselves infinitely, in the appetite for sweet sound; a momentary touch of an instrument in the twilight, as one passes through some unfamiliar room, in a chance company.

In these then, the favourite incidents of Giorgione's school, music or the musical intervals in our existence. life itself is conceived as a sort of listening—listening to music, to the reading of Bandello's novels, to the sound of water, to time as it flies. Often such moments are really our moments of play, and we are surprised at the unexpected blessedness of what may seem our least important part of time; not merely because play is in many instances that to which people really apply their own best powers, but also because at such times, the stress

of our servile, everyday attentiveness being relaxed, the happier powers in things without are permitted free passage, and have their way with us. And so, from music, the school of Giorgione passes often to the play which is like music; to those masques in which men avowedly do but play at real life, like children "dressing-up", disguised in the strange old Italian dresses, parti-coloured, or fantastic with embroidery and furs, of which the master was so curious a designer, and which, above all the spotless white linen at wrist and throat, he painted so dexterously.

But when people are happy in this thirsty land water will not be far off; and in the school of Giorgione, the presence of water—the well, or marble-rimmed pool, the drawing or pouring of water, as the woman pours it from a pitcher with her jewelled hand in the *Fête Champêtre*, listening, perhaps, to the cool sound as it falls, blent with the music of the pipes—is as characteristic and almost as suggestive, as that of music itself. And the landscape feels, and is glad of it also—a landscape full of clearness, of the effects of water, of fresh rain newly passed through the air, and collected into the grassy channels. The air, moreover, in the school of Giorgione, seems as vivid as the people who breathe it, and literally empyrean, all impurities being burnt out of it, and no taint, no floating particle of anything but its own proper elements allowed to subsist within it.

Its scenery is such as in England we call "park scenery", with some elusive refinement felt about the rustic buildings, the choice grass, the grouped trees, the undulations deftly economised for graceful effect. Only, in Italy all natural things are as it were woven through and through with gold thread, even the cypress revealing it among the folds of its blackness. And it is with gold dust, or gold thread, that these Venetian painters seem to work, spinning its fine filaments, through the solemn human flesh, away into the white plastered walls of the thatched huts. The harsher details of the mountains recede to a harmonious distance, the one peak of rich blue above the horizon remaining but as the sensible warrant of that due coolness which is all we need ask here of the Alps, with their dark rains and streams. Yet what real, airy space, as the eye passes from level to level, through the long-drawn valley in which Jacob embraces Rachel among the flocks! Nowhere is there a truer instance of that balance, that modulated unison of landscape and persons—of the human image and its accessories—already noticed as characteristic of the Venetian school, so that, in it, neither personage nor scenery is ever a mere pretext for the other.

Something like this seems to me to be the *vraie vérité* about Giorgione,

if I may adopt a serviceable expression, by which the French recognise those more liberal and durable impressions which, in respect of any really considerable person or subject, anything that has at all intricately occupied men's attention, lie beyond, and must supplement, the narrower range of the strictly ascertained facts about it. In this, Giorgione is but an illustration of a valuable general caution we may abide by in all criticism. As regards Giorgione himself, we have indeed to take note of all those negations and exceptions, by which, at first sight, a "new Vasari" seems merely to have confused our apprehension of a delightful object, to have explained away in our inheritance from past time what seemed of high value there. Yet it is not with a full understanding even of those exceptions that one can leave off just at this point. Properly qualified, such exceptions are but a salt of genuineness in our knowledge; and beyond all those strictly ascertained facts, we must take note of that indirect influence by which one like Giorgione, for instance, enlarges his permanent efficacy and really makes himself felt in our culture. In a just impression of that, is the essential truth, the *vraie vérité*, concerning him.

ROME

MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

“χειμερινὸς ὄνειρος, ὅτε μῆκισται αἱ νύκτες.”

PART THE FIRST

CHAPTER I

"THE RELIGION OF NUMA"

As, in the triumph of Christianity, the old religion lingered latest in the country, and died out at last as but paganism—the religion of the villagers, before the advance of the Christian Church; so, in an earlier century, it was in places remote from town-life that the older and purer forms of paganism itself had survived the longest. While, in Rome, new religions had arisen with bewildering complexity around the dying old one, the earlier and simpler patriarchal religion, "the religion of Numa", as people loved to fancy, lingered on with little change amid the pastoral life, out of the habits and sentiment of which so much of it had grown. Glimpses of such a survival we may catch below the merely artificial attitudes of Latin pastoral poetry; in Tibullus especially, who has preserved for us many poetic details of old Roman religious usage.

At mihi contingat patrios celebrare Penates,
Reddereque antiquo menstrua thura Lari:

—he prays, with unaffected seriousness. Something liturgical, with repetitions of a consecrated form of words, is traceable in one of his elegies, as part of the order of a birthday sacrifice. The hearth, from a spark of which, as one form of old legend related, the child Romulus had been miraculously born, was still indeed an altar; and the worthiest sacrifice to the gods the perfect physical sanity of the young men and women, which the scrupulous ways of that religion of the hearth had tended to maintain. A religion of usages and sentiment rather than of facts and belief, and attached to very definite things and places—the oak of immemorial age, the rock on the heath fashioned by weather as if by some dim human art, the shadowy grove of ilex, passing into which one exclaimed involuntarily, in consecrated phrase, Deity is in this Place! *Numen Inest!*—it was in natural harmony with the temper of a quiet people amid the spectacle of rural life, like that simpler faith between man and man, which Tibullus expressly connects with the period when, with an inexpensive worship, the old wooden gods had been still pressed for room in their homely little shrines.

And about the time when the dying Antoninus Pius ordered his

golden image of Fortune to be carried into the chamber of his successor (now about to test the truth of the old Platonic contention, that the world would at last find itself happy, could it detach some reluctant philosophic student from the more desirable life of celestial contemplation, and compel him to rule it), there was a boy living in an old country-house, half farm, half villa, who, for himself, recruited that body of antique traditions by a spontaneous force of religious veneration such as had originally called them into being. More than a century and a half had past since Tibullus had written; but the restoration of religious usages, and their retention where they still survived, was meantime come to be the fashion through the influence of imperial example; and what had been in the main a matter of family pride with his father, was sustained by a native instinct of devotion in the young Marius. A sense of conscious powers external to ourselves, pleased or displeased by the right or wrong conduct of every circumstance of daily life—that *conscience*, of which the old Roman religion was a formal, habitual recognition, was become in him a powerful current of feeling and observance. The old-fashioned, partly puritanic awe, the power of which Wordsworth noted and valued so highly in a northern peasantry, had its counterpart in the feeling of the Roman lad, as he passed the spot, “touched of heaven”, where the lightning had struck dead an aged labourer in the field: an upright stone, still with mouldering garlands about it, marked the place. He brought to that system of symbolic usages, and they in turn developed in him further, a great seriousness—an impressibility to the sacredness of time, of life and its events, and the circumstances of family fellowship; of such gifts to men as fire, water, the earth, from labour on which they live, really understood by him as gifts—a sense of religious responsibility in the reception of them. It was a religion for the most part of fear, of multitudinous scruples, of a year-long burden of forms; yet rarely (on clear summer mornings, for instance) the thought of those heavenly powers afforded a welcome channel for the almost stifling sense of health and delight in him, and relieved it as gratitude to the gods.

The day of the “little” or private *Ambarvalia* was come, to be celebrated by a single family for the welfare of all belonging to it, as the great college of the Arval Brothers officiated at Rome in the interest of the whole state. At the appointed time all work ceases; the instruments of labour lie untouched, hung with wreaths of flowers, while masters and servants together go in solemn procession along the dry paths of vineyard and cornfield, conducting the victims whose blood is presently to be shed for the purification from all natural or supernatural taint of the lands they have “gone about”. The old

Latin words of the liturgy, to be said as the procession moved on its way, though their precise meaning was long since become unintelligible, were recited from an ancient illuminated roll, kept in the painted chest in the hall, together with the family records. Early on that day the girls of the farm had been busy in the great portico, filling large baskets with flowers plucked short from branches of apple and cherry, then in spacious bloom, to strew before the quaint images of the gods—Ceres and Bacchus and the yet more mysterious Dea Dia—as they passed through the fields, carried in their little houses on the shoulders of white-clad youths, who were understood to proceed to this office in perfect temperance, as pure in soul and body as the air they breathed in the firm weather of that early summertime. The clean lustral water and the full incense-box were carried after them. The altars were gay with garlands of wool and the more sumptuous sort of blossom and green herbs to be thrown into the sacrificial fire, fresh gathered this morning from a particular plot in the old garden, set apart for the purpose. Just then the young leaves were almost as fragrant as flowers, and the scent of the bean-fields mingled pleasantly with the cloud of incense. But for the monotonous intonation of the liturgy by the priests, clad in their strange, stiff, antique vestments, and bearing ears of green corn upon their heads, secured by flowing bands of white, the procession moved in absolute stillness, all persons, even the children, abstaining from speech after the utterance of the pontifical formula, *Favete linguis!*—Silence! Propitious Silence!—lest any words save those proper to the occasion should hinder the religious efficacy of the rite.

With the lad Marius, who, as the head of his house, took a leading part in the ceremonies of the day, there was a devout effort to complete this impressive outward silence by that inward tacitness of mind, esteemed so important by religious Romans in the performance of these sacred functions. To him the sustained stillness without seemed really but to be waiting upon that interior, mental condition of preparation or expectancy, for which he was just then intently striving. The persons about him, certainly, had never been challenged by those prayers and ceremonies to any ponderings on the divine nature; they conceived them rather to be the appointed means of setting such troublesome movements at rest. By them, "the religion of Numa", so staid, ideal and comely, the object of so much jealous conservatism, though of direct service as lending sanction to a sort of high scrupulosity, especially in the chief points of domestic conduct, was mainly prized as being, through its hereditary character, something like a personal distinction—as contributing, among the other accessories of an ancient house, to the production of that aristocratic atmosphere

which separated them from newly-made people. But in the young Marius, the very absence from those venerable usages of all definite history and dogmatic interpretation, had already awakened much speculative activity; and to-day, starting from the actual details of the divine service, some very lively surmises, though scarcely distinct enough to be thoughts, were moving backwards and forwards in his mind, as the stirring wind had done all day among the trees, and were like the passing of some mysterious influence over all the elements of his nature and experience. One thing only distracted him—a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost on his lips, for the sacrificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself, a piece of everyday butcher's work, such as we decorously hide out of sight; though some then present certainly displayed a frank curiosity in the spectacle thus permitted them on a religious pretext. The old sculptors of the great procession on the frieze of the *Parthenon* at Athens, have delineated the placid heads of the victims led in it to sacrifice, with a perfect feeling for animals in forcible contrast with any indifference as to their sufferings. It was this contrast that distracted Marius now in the blessing of his fields, and qualified his devout absorption upon the scrupulous fulfilment of all the details of the ceremonial, as the procession approached the altars.

The names of that great populace of "little gods", dear to the Roman home, which the pontiffs had placed on the sacred list of the *Indigitamenta*, to be invoked, because they can help, on special occasions, were not forgotten in the long litany—Vatican who causes the infant to utter his first cry, Fabulinus who prompts his first word, Cuba who keeps him quiet in his cot, Domiduca especially, for whom Marius had through life a particular memory and devotion, the goddess who watches over one's safe coming home. The urns of the dead in the family chapel received their due service. They also were now become something divine, a goodly company of friendly and protecting spirits, encamped about the place of their former abode—above all others, the father, dead ten years before, of whom, remembering but a tall, grave figure above him in early childhood, Marius habitually thought as a *genius* a little cold and severe.

Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi,
Sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera.—

Perhaps!—but certainly needs his altar here below, and garlands to-day upon his urn. But the dead *genii* were satisfied with little—a few violets, a cake dipped in wine, or a morsel of honeycomb. Daily, from the time

when his childish footsteps were still uncertain, had Marius taken them their portion of the family meal, at the second course, amidst the silence of the company. They loved those who brought them their sustenance; but, deprived of these services, would be heard wandering through the house, crying sorrowfully in the stillness of the night.

And those simple gifts, like other objects as trivial—bread, oil, wine, milk—had regained for him, by their use in such religious service, that poetic and as it were moral significance, which surely belongs to all the means of daily life, could we but break through the veil of our familiarity with things by no means vulgar in themselves. A hymn followed, while the whole assembly stood with veiled faces. The fire rose up readily from the altars, in clean, bright flame—a favourable omen, making it a duty to render the mirth of the evening complete. Old wine was poured out freely for the servants at supper in the great kitchen, where they had worked in the imperfect light through the long evenings of winter. The young Marius himself took but a very sober part in the noisy feasting. A devout, regretful after-taste of what had been really beautiful in the ritual he had accomplished took him early away, that he might the better recall in reverie all the circumstances of the celebration of the day. As he sank into a sleep, pleasant with all the influences of long hours in the open air, he seemed still to be moving in procession through the fields, with a kind of pleasurable awe. That feeling was still upon him as he awoke amid the beating of violent rain on the shutters, in the first storm of the season. The thunder which startled him from sleep seemed to make the solitude of his chamber almost painfully complete, as if the nearness of those angry clouds shut him up in a close place alone in the world. Then he thought of the sort of protection which that day's ceremonies assured. To procure an agreement with the gods—*Pacem deorum exposcere*: that was the meaning of what they had all day been busy upon. In a faith, sincere but half-suspicious, he would fain have those Powers at least not against him. His own nearer household gods were all around his bed. The spell of his religion as a part of the very essence of home, its intimacy, its dignity and security, was forcible at that moment; only, it seemed to involve certain heavy demands upon him.

CHAPTER II

WHITE-NIGHTS

To an instinctive seriousness, the material abode in which the childhood of Marius was passed had largely added. Nothing, you felt, as you first caught sight of that coy, retired place,—surely nothing could happen there, without its full accompaniment of thought or reverie. *White-nights!* so you might interpret its old Latin name.* “The red rose came first,” says a quaint German mystic, speaking of “the mystery of so-called *white* things”, as being “ever an after-thought—the doubles, or seconds, of real things, and themselves but half-real, half-material—the white queen, the white witch, the white mass, which, as the black mass is a travesty of the true mass turned to evil by horrible old witches, is celebrated by young candidates for the priesthood with an unconsecrated host, by way of rehearsal.” So, white-nights, I suppose, after something like the same analogy, should be nights not of quite blank forgetfulness, but passed in continuous dreaming, only half veiled by sleep. Certainly the place was, in such case, true to its fanciful name in this, that you might very well conceive, in face of it, that dreaming even in the daytime might come to much there.

The young Marius represented an ancient family whose estate had come down to him much curtailed through the extravagance of a certain Marcellus two generations before, a favourite in his day of the fashionable world at Rome, where he had at least spent his substance with a correctness of taste Marius might seem to have inherited from him; he was believed also to resemble him in a singularly pleasant smile, consistent however, in the younger face, with some degree of sombre expression when the mind within was but slightly moved.

As the means of life decreased, the farm had crept nearer and nearer to the dwelling-house, about which there was therefore a trace of workday negligence or homeliness, not without its picturesque charm for some, for the young master himself among them. The more observant passer-by would note, curious as to the inmates, a certain amount of dainty care amid that neglect, as if it came in part, perhaps, from a reluctance to disturb old associations. It was significant of the national character, that a sort of elegant *gentleman* farming, as we say, had been much affected by some of the most cultivated Romans. But it became something more than an elegant diversion, something of a serious business, with the household of Marius; and his actual interest

* *Ad Vigiliis Albas.* [W.P.]

in the cultivation of the earth and the care of flocks had brought him, at least, intimately near to those elementary conditions of life, a reverence for which, the great Roman poet, as he has shown by his own half-mystic pre-occupation with them, held to be the ground of primitive Roman religion, as of primitive morals. But then, farm-life in Italy, including the culture of the olive and the vine, has a grace of its own, and might well contribute to the production of an ideal dignity of character, like that of nature itself in this gifted region. Vulgarity seemed impossible. The place, though impoverished, was still deservedly dear, full of venerable memories, and with a living sweetness of its own for to-day.

To hold by such ceremonial traditions had been a part of the struggling family pride of the lad's father, to which the example of the head of the state, old Antoninus Pius—an example to be still further enforced by his successor—had given a fresh though perhaps somewhat artificial popularity. It had been consistent with many another homely and old-fashioned trait in him, not to undervalue the charm of exclusiveness and immemorial authority, which membership in a local priestly college, hereditary in his house, conferred upon him. To set a real value on these things was but one element in that pious concern for his home and all that belonged to it, which, as Marius afterwards discovered, had been a strong motive with his father. The ancient hymn—*Jana Novella!*—was still sung by his people, as the new moon grew bright in the west, and even their wild custom of leaping through heaps of blazing straw on a certain night in summer was not discouraged. The privilege of augury itself, according to tradition, had at one time belonged to his race; and if you can imagine how, once in a way, an impressible boy might have an *inkling*, an inward mystic intimation, of the meaning and consequences of all that, what was implied in it becoming explicit for him, you conceive aright the mind of Marius, in whose house the auspices were still carefully consulted before every undertaking of moment.

The devotion of the father then had handed on loyally—and that is all many not unimportant persons ever find to do—a certain tradition of life, which came to mean much for the young Marius. The feeling with which he thought of his dead father was almost exclusively that of awe; though crossed at times by a not unpleasant sense of liberty, as he could but confess to himself, pondering, in the actual absence of so weighty and continual a restraint, upon the arbitrary power which Roman religion and Roman law gave to the parent over the son. On the part of his mother, on the other hand, entertaining the husband's memory, there was a sustained freshness of regret, together with the recognition, as Marius fancied, of some costly self-sacrifice

to be credited to the dead. The life of the widow, languid and shadowy enough but for the poignancy of that regret, was like one long service to the departed soul; its many annual observances centering about the funeral urn—a tiny, delicately carved marble house, still white and fair, in the family-chapel, wreathed always with the richest flowers from the garden. To the dead, in fact, was conceded in such places a somewhat closer neighbourhood to the old homes they were thought still to protect, than is usual with us, or was usual in Rome itself—a closeness which the living welcomed, so diverse are the ways of our human sentiment, and in which the more wealthy, at least in the country, might indulge themselves. All this Marius followed with a devout interest, sincerely touched and awed by his mother's sorrow. After the deification of the emperors, we are told, it was considered impious so much as to use any coarse expression in the presence of their images. To Marius the whole of life seemed full of sacred presences, demanding of him a similar collectedness. The severe and archaic religion of the villa, as he conceived it, begot in him a sort of devout circumspection lest he should fall short at any point of the demand upon him of anything in which deity was concerned. He must satisfy with a kind of sacred equity, he must be very cautious lest he be found wanting to, the claims of others, in their joys and calamities—the happiness which deity sanctioned, or the blows in which it made itself felt. And from habit, this feeling of a responsibility towards the world of men and things, towards a claim for due sentiment concerning them on his side, came to be a part of his nature not to be put off. It kept him serious and dignified amid the Epicurean speculations which in after years much engrossed him, and when he had learned to think of all religions as indifferent, serious amid many fopperies and through many languid days, and made him anticipate all his life long as a thing towards which he must carefully train himself, some great occasion of self-devotion, such as really came, that should consecrate his life, and, it might be, its memory with others, as the early Christian looked forward to martyrdom at the end of his course, as a seal of worth upon it.

The traveller, descending from the slopes of Luna, even as he got his first view of the *Port-of-Venus*, would pause by the way, to read the face, as it were, of so beautiful a dwelling-place, lying away from the white road, at the point where it began to decline somewhat steeply to the marsh-land below. The building of pale red and yellow marble, mellowed by age, which he saw beyond the gates, was indeed but the exquisite fragment of a once large and sumptuous villa. Two centuries of the play of the sea-wind were in the velvet of the mosses which lay along its inaccessible ledges and angles. Here and there

the marble plates had slipped from their places, where the delicate weeds had forced their way. The graceful wildness which prevailed in garden and farm gave place to a singular nicety about the actual habitation, and a still more scrupulous sweetness and order reigned within. The old Roman architects seem to have well understood the decorative value of the floor—the real economy there was, in the production of rich interior effect, of a somewhat lavish expenditure upon the surface they trod on. The pavement of the hall had lost something of its evenness; but, though a little rough to the foot, polished and cared for like a piece of silver, looked, as mosaic-work is apt to do, its best in old age. Most noticeable among the ancestral masks, each in its little cedarn chest below the cornice, was that of the wasteful but elegant Marcellus, with the quaint resemblance in its yellow waxen features to Marius, just then so full of animation and country colour. A chamber, curved ingeniously into oval form, which he had added to the mansion, still contained his collection of works of art; above all, that head of Medusa, for which the villa was famous. The spoilers of one of the old Greek towns on the coast had flung away or lost the thing, as it seemed, in some rapid flight across the river below, from the sands of which it was drawn up in a fisherman's net, with the fine golden *laminae* still clinging here and there to the bronze. It was Marcellus also who had contrived the prospect-tower of two storeys with the white pigeon-house above, so characteristic of the place. The little glazed windows in the uppermost chamber framed each its dainty landscape—the pallid crags of Carrara, like wildly twisted snow-drifts above the purple heath; the distant harbour with its freight of white marble going to sea; the lighthouse temple of *Venus Speciosa* on its dark headland, amid the long-drawn curves of white breakers. Even on summer nights the air there had always a motion in it, and drove the scent of the new-mown hay along all the passages of the house.

Something pensive, spell-bound, and but half real, something cloistral or monastic, as we should say, united to this exquisite order, made the whole place seem to Marius, as it were, *sacellum*, the peculiar sanctuary, of his mother, who, still in real widowhood, provided the deceased Marius the elder with that secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realised memory of them—the “subjective immortality”, to use a modern phrase, for which many a Roman epitaph cries out plaintively to widow or sister or daughter, still in the land of the living. Certainly, if any such considerations regarding them do reach the shadowy people, he enjoyed that secondary existence, that warm place still left, in thought at least, beside the living, the desire for which is actually, in various forms, so great a motive

with most of us. And Marius the younger, even thus early, came to think of women's tears, of women's hands to lay one to rest, in death as in the sleep of childhood, as a sort of natural want. The soft lines of the white hands and face, set among the many folds of the veil and stole of the Roman widow, busy upon her needlework, or with music sometimes, defined themselves for him as the typical expression of maternity. Helping her with her white and purple wools, and caring for her musical instruments, he won, as if from the handling of such things, an urbane and feminine refinement, qualifying duly his country-grown habits—the sense of a certain delicate blandness, which he relished, above all, on returning to the “chapel” of his mother, after long days of open-air exercise, in winter or stormy summer. For poetic souls in old Italy felt, hardly less strongly than the English, the pleasures of winter, of the hearth, with the very dead warm in its generous heat, keeping the young myrtles in flower, though the hail is beating hard without. One important principle, of fruit afterwards in his Roman life, that relish for the country fixed deeply in him; in the winters especially, when the sufferings of the animal world became so palpable even to the least observant. It fixed in him a sympathy for all creatures, for the almost human troubles and sicknesses of the flocks, for instance. It was a feeling which had in it something of religious veneration for life as such—for that mysterious essence which man is powerless to create in even the feeblest degree. One by one, at the desire of his mother, the lad broke down his cherished traps and springes for the hungry wild birds on the salt marsh. A white bird, she told him once, looking at him gravely, a bird which he must carry in his bosom across a crowded public place—his own soul was like that! Would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, unruffled and unsoiled? And as his mother became to him the very type of maternity in things, its unfailing pity and protectiveness, and maternity itself the central type of all love;—so, that beautiful dwelling-place lent the reality of concrete outline to a peculiar ideal of home, which throughout the rest of his life, he seemed, amid many distractions of spirit, to be ever seeking to regain.

And a certain vague fear of evil, constitutional in him, enhanced still further this sentiment of home as a place of tried security. His religion, that old Italian religion, in contrast with the really light-hearted religion of Greece, had its deep undercurrent of gloom, its sad, haunting imageries, not exclusively confined to the walls of Etruscan tombs. The function of the conscience, not always as the prompter of gratitude for benefits received, but oftenest as his accuser before those angry heavenly masters, had a large part in it; and the

sense of some unexplored evil, ever dogging his footsteps, made him oddly suspicious of particular places and persons. Though his liking for animals was so strong, yet one fierce day in early summer, as he walked along a narrow road, he had seen the snakes breeding, and ever afterwards avoided that place and its ugly associations, for there was something in the incident which made food distasteful and his sleep uneasy for many days afterwards. The memory of it however had almost passed away, when at a corner of a street in Pisa, he came upon an African showman exhibiting a great serpent: once more, as the reptile writhed, the former painful impression revived: it was like a peep into the lower side of the real world, and again for many days took all sweetness from food and sleep. He wondered at himself indeed, trying to puzzle out the secret of that repugnance, having no particular dread of a snake's bite, like one of his companions, who had put his hand into the mouth of an old garden-god and roused there a sluggish viper. A kind of pity even mingled with his aversion, and he could hardly have killed or injured the animals, which seemed already to suffer by the very circumstance of their life, being what they were. It was something like a fear of the supernatural, or perhaps rather a moral feeling, for the face of a great serpent, with no grace of fur or feathers, so different from quadruped or bird, has a sort of humanity of aspect in its spotted and clouded nakedness. There was a humanity, dusty and sordid and as if far gone in corruption, in the sluggish coil, as it awoke suddenly into one metallic spring of pure enmity against him. Long afterwards, when it happened that at Rome he saw, a second time, a showman with his serpents, he remembered the night which had then followed, thinking, in Saint Augustine's vein, on the real greatness of those little troubles of children, of which older people make light; but with a sudden gratitude also, as he reflected how richly possessed his life had actually been by beautiful aspects and imageries, seeing how greatly what was repugnant to the eye disturbed his peace.

Thus the boyhood of Marius passed; on the whole, more given to contemplation than to action. Less prosperous in fortune than at an earlier day there had been reason to expect, and animating his solitude, as he read eagerly and intelligently, with the traditions of the past, already he lived much in the realm of the imagination, and became betimes, as he was to continue all through life, something of an idealist, constructing the world for himself in great measure from within, by the exercise of meditative power. A vein of subjective philosophy, with the individual for its standard of all things, there would be always in his intellectual scheme of the world and of conduct, with a certain incapacity wholly to accept other men's valuations.

And the generation of this peculiar element in his temper he could trace up to the days when his life had been so like the reading of a romance to him. Had the Romans a word for *unworldly*? The beautiful word *umbratilis* perhaps comes nearest to it; and, with that precise sense, might describe the spirit in which he prepared himself for the sacerdotal function hereditary in his family—the sort of mystic enjoyment he had in the abstinence, the strenuous self-control and *ascēsis*, which such preparation involved. Like the young Ion in the beautiful opening of the play of Euripides, who every morning sweeps the temple floor with such a fund of cheerfulness in his service, he was apt to be happy in sacred places, with a susceptibility to their peculiar influences which he never outgrew; so that often in after-times, quite unexpectedly, this feeling would revive in him with undiminished freshness. That first, early, boyish ideal of priesthood, the sense of dedication, survived through all the distractions of the world, and when all thought of such vocation had finally passed from him, as a ministry, in spirit at least, towards a sort of hieratic beauty and order in the conduct of life.

And now what relieved in part this over-tension of soul was the lad's pleasure in the country and the open air; above all, the ramble to the coast, over the marsh with its dwarf roses and wild lavender, and delightful signs, one after another—the abandoned boat, the ruined flood-gates, the flock of wild birds—that one was approaching the sea; the long summer-day of idleness among its vague scents and sounds. And it was characteristic of him that he relished especially the grave, subdued, northern notes in all that—the charm of the French or English notes, as we might term them—in the luxuriant Italian landscape.

CHAPTER III

CHANGE OF AIR

Dilexi decorem domus tuæ

THAT almost morbid religious idealism, and his healthful love of the country, were both alike developed by the circumstances of a journey, which happened about this time, when Marius was taken to a certain temple of Aesculapius, among the hills of Etruria, as was then usual in such cases, for the cure of some boyish sickness. The religion of Aesculapius, though borrowed from Greece, had been naturalised in Rome in the old republican times; but had reached under the Antonines the height of its popularity throughout the Roman world. That was

an age of valetudinarians, in many instances of imaginary ones; but below its various crazes concerning health and disease, largely multiplied a few years after the time of which I am speaking by the miseries of a great pestilence, lay a valuable, because partly practicable, belief that all the maladies of the soul might be reached through the subtle gateways of the body.

Salus, salvation, for the Romans, had come to mean bodily sanity. The religion of the god of bodily health, *Salvator*, as they called him absolutely, had a chance just then of becoming the one religion; that mild and philanthropic son of Apollo surviving, or absorbing, all other pagan godhead. The apparatus of the medical art, the salutary mineral or herb, diet or abstinence, and all the varieties of the bath, came to have a kind of sacramental character, so deep was the feeling, in more serious minds, of a moral or spiritual profit in physical health, beyond the obvious bodily advantages one had of it; the body becoming truly, in that case, but a quiet handmaid of the soul. The priesthood or "family" of Aesculapius, a vast college, believed to be in possession of certain precious medical secrets, came nearest perhaps, of all the institutions of the pagan world, to the Christian priesthood; the temples of the god, rich in some instances with the accumulated thank-offerings of centuries of a tasteful devotion, being really also a kind of hospitals for the sick, administered in a full conviction of the religiousness, the refined and sacred happiness, of a life spent in the relieving of pain.

Elements of a really experimental and progressive knowledge there were doubtless amid this devout enthusiasm, bent so faithfully on the reception of health as a direct gift from God; but for the most part his care was held to take effect through a machinery easily capable of misuse for purposes of religious fraud. Through dreams, above all, inspired by Aesculapius himself, information as to the cause and cure of a malady was supposed to come to the sufferer, in a belief based on the truth that dreams do sometimes, for those who watch them carefully, give many hints concerning the conditions of the body—those latent weak points at which disease or death may most easily break into it. In the time of Marcus Aurelius these medical dreams had become more than ever a fashionable caprice. Aristides, the "Orator", a man of undoubted intellectual power, has devoted six discourses to their interpretation; the really scientific Galen has recorded how beneficently they had intervened in his own case, at certain turning-points of life; and a belief in them was one of the frailties of the wise emperor himself. Partly for the sake of these dreams, living ministers of the god, more likely to come to one in his actual dwelling-place than elsewhere, it was almost a necessity that

the patient should sleep one or more nights within the precincts of a temple consecrated to his service, during which time he must observe certain rules prescribed by the priests.

For this purpose, after devoutly saluting the *Lares*, as was customary before starting on a journey, Marius set forth one summer morning on his way to the famous temple which lay among the hills beyond the valley of the Arnus. It was his greatest adventure hitherto; and he had much pleasure in all its details, in spite of his feverishness. Starting early, under the guidance of an old serving-man who drove the mules, with his wife who took all that was needful for their refreshment on the way and for the offering at the shrine, they went, under the genial heat, halting now and then to pluck certain flowers seen for the first time on these high places, upwards, through a long day of sunshine, while cliffs and woods sank gradually below their path. The evening came as they passed along a steep white road with many windings among the pines, and it was night when they reached the temple, the lights of which shone out upon them pausing before the gates of the sacred enclosure, while Marius became alive to a singular purity in the air. A rippling of water about the place was the only thing audible, as they waited till two priestly figures, speaking Greek to one another, admitted them into a large, white-walled and clearly lighted guest-chamber, in which, while he partook of a simple but wholesomely prepared supper, Marius still seemed to feel pleasantly the height they had attained to among the hills.

The agreeable sense of all this was spoiled by one thing only, his old fear of serpents; for it was under the form of a serpent that Aesculapius had come to Rome, and the last definite thought of his weary head before he fell asleep had been a dread either that the god might appear, as he was said sometimes to do, under this hideous aspect, or perhaps one of those great sallow-hued snakes themselves, kept in the sacred place, as he had also heard was usual.

And after an hour's feverish dreaming he awoke—with a cry, it would seem, for some one had entered the room bearing a light. The footsteps of the youthful figure which approached and sat by his bedside were certainly real. Ever afterwards, when the thought arose in his mind of some unhopèd-for but entire relief from distress, like blue sky in a storm at sea, would come back the memory of that gracious countenance which, amid all the kindness of its gaze, had yet a certain air of predominance over him, so that he seemed now for the first time to have found the master of his spirit. It would have been sweet to be the servant of him who now sat beside him speaking.

He caught a lesson from what was then said, still somewhat beyond his years, a lesson in the skilled cultivation of life, of experience, of

opportunity, which seemed to be the aim of the young priest's recommendations. The sum of them, through various forgotten intervals of argument, as might really have happened in a dream, was the precept, repeated many times under slightly varied aspects, of a diligent promotion of the capacity of the eye, inasmuch as in the eye would lie for him the determining influence of life: he was of the number of those who, in the words of a poet who came long after, must be "made perfect by the love of visible beauty". The discourse was conceived from the point of view of a theory Marius found afterwards in Plato's *Phædrus*, which supposes men's spirits susceptible to certain influences, diffused, after the manner of streams or currents, by fair things or persons visibly present—green fields, for instance, or children's faces—into the air around them, acting, in the case of some peculiar natures, like potent material essences, and conforming the seer to themselves as with some cunning physical necessity. This theory,* in itself so fantastic, had however determined in a range of methodical suggestions, altogether quaint here and there from their circumstantial minuteness. And throughout, the possibility of some vision, as of a new city coming down "like a bride out of heaven", a vision still indeed, it might seem, a long way off, but to be granted perhaps one day to the eyes thus trained, was presented as the motive of this laboriously practical direction.

"If thou wouldst have all about thee like the colours of some fresh picture, in a clear light," so the discourse recommended after a pause, "be temperate in thy religious motions, in love, in wine, in all things, and of a peaceful heart with thy fellows." To keep the eye clear by a sort of exquisite personal alacrity and cleanliness, extending even to his dwelling-place; to discriminate, ever more and more fastidiously, select form and colour in things from what was less select; to meditate much on the beautiful visible objects, on objects, more especially, connected with the period of youth—on children at play in the morning, the trees in early spring, on young animals, on the fashions and amusements of young men; to keep ever by him if it were but a single choice flower, a graceful animal or sea-shell, as a token and representative of the whole kingdom of such things; to avoid jealousy, in his way through the world, everything repugnant to sight; and, should any circumstance tempt him to a general converse in the range of such objects, to disentangle himself from that circumstance at any cost of place, money, or opportunity; such were in brief outline the duties recognised, the rights demanded, in this new formula of life. And it was delivered with conviction; as if the speaker verily saw into the recesses of the mental and physical being of the listener,

* Η ἀπορροή τοῦ καλλοῦς [W.P.]

while his own expression of perfect temperance had in it a fascinating power—the merely negative element of purity, the mere freedom from taint or flaw, in exercise as a positive influence. Long afterwards, when Marius read the *Charmides*—that other dialogue of Plato, into which he seems to have expressed the very genius of old Greek temperance—the image of this speaker came back vividly before him, to take the chief part in the conversation.

It was as a weighty sanction of such temperance, in almost visible symbolism (an outward imagery identifying itself with unseen moralities) that the memory of that night's double experience, the dream of the great sallow snake and the utterance of the young priest, always returned to him, and the contrast therein involved made him revolt with unfaltering instinct from the bare thought of any excess in sleep, or diet, or even in matters of taste, still more from any excess of a coarser kind.

When he awoke again, still in the exceeding freshness he had felt on his arrival, and now in full sunlight, it was as if his sickness had really departed with the terror of the night: a confusion had passed from the brain, a painful dryness from his hands. Simply to be alive and there was a delight; and as he bathed in the fresh water set ready for his use, the air of the room about him seemed like pure gold, the very shadows rich with colour. Summoned at length by one of the white-robed brethren, he went out to walk in the temple garden. At a distance, on either side, his guide pointed out to him the *Houses of Birth and Death*, erected for the reception respectively of women about to become mothers, and of persons about to die; neither of those incidents being allowed to defile, as was thought, the actual precincts of the shrine. His visitor of the previous night he saw nowhere again. But among the official ministers of the place there was one, already marked as of great celebrity, whom Marius saw often in later days at Rome, the physician Galen, now about thirty years old. He was standing, the hood partly drawn over his face, beside the holy well, as Marius and his guide approached it.

This famous well or conduit, primary cause of the temple and its surrounding institutions, was supplied by the water of a spring flowing directly out of the rocky foundations of the shrine. From the rim of its basin rose a circle of trim columns to support a cupola of singular lightness and grace, itself full of reflected light from the rippling surface, through which might be traced the wavy figurework of the marble lining below as the stream of water rushed in. Legend told of a visit of Aesculapius to this place, earlier and happier than his first coming to Rome: an inscription around the cupola recorded it in letters of gold. "Being come unto this place the son of God loved

it exceedingly:"—*Huc perfectus filius Dei maxime amavit hunc locum*;—and it was then that that most intimately human of the gods had given men the well, with all its salutary properties. The element itself when received into the mouth, in consequence of its entire freedom from adhering organic matter, was more like a draught of wonderfully pure air than water; and after tasting, Marius was told many mysterious circumstances concerning it, by one and another of the bystanders:—he who drank often thereof might well think he had tasted of the Homeric *lotus*, so great became his desire to remain always on that spot: carried to other places, it was almost indefinitely conservative of its fine qualities: nay! a few drops of it would amend other water; and it flowed not only with unvarying abundance but with a volume so oddly rhythmical that the well stood always full to the brim, whatever quantity might be drawn from it, seeming to answer with strange alacrity of service to human needs, like a true creature and pupil of the philanthropic god. Certainly the little crowd around seemed to find singular refreshment in gazing on it. The whole place appeared sensibly influenced by the amiable and healthful spirit of the thing. All the objects of the country were there at their freshest. In the great park-like enclosure for the maintenance of the sacred animals offered by the convalescent, grass and trees were allowed to grow with a kind of graceful wildness; otherwise, all was wonderfully nice. And that freshness seemed to have something moral in its influence, as if it acted upon the body and the merely bodily powers of apprehension, through the intelligence; and to the end of his visit Marius saw no more serpents.

A lad was just then drawing water for ritual uses, and Marius followed him as he returned from the well, more and more impressed by the religiousness of all he saw, on his way through a long cloister or corridor, the walls well-nigh hidden under votive inscriptions recording favours from the son of Apollo, and with a distant fragrance of incense in the air, explained when he turned aside through an open doorway into the temple itself. His heart bounded as the refined and dainty magnificence of the place came upon him suddenly, in the flood of early sunshine, with the ceremonial lights burning here and there, and withal a singular expression of sacred order, a surprising cleanliness and simplicity. Certain priests, men whose countenances bore a deep impression of cultivated mind, each with his little group of assistants, were gliding round silently to perform their morning salutation to the god, raising the closed thumb and finger of the right hand with a kiss in the air, as they came and went on their sacred business, bearing their frankincense and lustral water. Around the walls, at such a level that the worshippers might read, as in a

book, the story of the god and his sons, the brotherhood of the *Asclepiadæ*, ran a series of imageries, in low relief, their delicate light and shade being heightened, here and there, with gold. Fullest of inspired and sacred expression, as if in this place the chisel of the artist had indeed dealt not with marble but with the very breath of feeling and thought, was the scene in which the earliest generation of the sons of Aesculapius were transformed into healing dreams; for "grown now too glorious to abide longer among men, by the aid of their sire they put away their mortal bodies, and came into another country, yet not indeed into Elysium nor into the Islands of the Blest. But being made like to the immortal gods, they began to pass about through the world, changed thus far from their first form that they appear eternally young, as many persons have seen them in many places—ministers and heralds of their father, passing to and fro over the earth, like gliding stars. Which thing is, indeed, the most wonderful concerning them!" And in this scene, as throughout the series, with all its crowded personages, Marius noted on the carved faces the same peculiar union of unctiousness, almost of hilarity, with a certain self-possession and reserve, which was conspicuous in the living ministrants around him.

In the central space, upon a pillar or pedestal, hung, *ex voto*, with the richest personal ornaments, stood the image of Aesculapius himself, surrounded by choice flowering plants. It presented the type, still with something of the severity of the earlier art of Greece about it, not of an aged and crafty physician, but of a youth, earnest and strong of aspect, carrying an *ampulla* or bottle in one hand, and in the other a traveller's staff, a pilgrim among his pilgrim worshippers; and one of the ministers explained to Marius this pilgrim guise.—One chief source of the master's knowledge of healing had been observation of the remedies resorted to by animals labouring under disease or pain—what leaf or berry the lizard or dormouse lay upon its wounded fellow; to which purpose for long years he had led the life of a wanderer, in wild places. The boy took his place as the last comer, a little way behind the group of worshippers who stood in front of the image. There, with uplifted face, the palms of his two hands raised and open before him, and taught by the priest, he said his collect of thanksgiving and prayer (Aristeides has recorded it at the end of the *Asclepiadæ*) to the Inspired Dreams:—

"O ye children of Apollo! who in time past have stilled the waves of sorrow for many people, lighting up a lamp of safety before those who travel by sea and land, be pleased, in your great condescension, though ye be equal in glory with your elder brethren the Dioscuri, and your lot in immortal youth be as theirs, to accept this prayer,

which in sleep and vision ye have inspired. Order it aright, I pray you, according to your loving-kindness to men. Preserve me from sickness; and endure my body with such a measure of health as may suffice it for the obeying of the spirit, that I may pass my days unhindered and in quietness."

On the last morning of his visit Marius entered the shrine again, and just before his departure the priest, who had been his special director during his stay at the place, lifting a cunningly contrived panel, which formed the back of one of the carved seats, bade him look through. What he saw was like the vision of a new world, by the opening of some unsuspected window in a familiar dwelling-place. He looked out upon a long-drawn valley of singularly cheerful aspect, hidden, by the peculiar conformation of the locality, from all points of observation but this. In a green meadow at the foot of the steep olive-clad rocks below, the novices were taking their exercise. The softly sloping sides of the vale lay alike in full sunlight; and its distant opening was closed by a beautifully formed mountain, from which the last wreaths of morning mist were rising under the heat. It might have seemed the very presentment of a land of hope, its hollow brimful of a shadow of blue flowers; and lo! on the one level space of the horizon, in a long dark line, were towers and a dome; and that was Pisa.—Or Rome, was it? asked Marius, ready to believe the utmost, in his excitement.

All this served, as he understood afterwards in retrospect, at once to strengthen and to purify a certain vein of character in him. Developing the ideal, pre-existent there, of a religious beauty, associated for the future with the exquisite splendour of the temple of Aesculapius, as it dawned upon him on that morning of his first visit—it developed that ideal in connexion with a vivid sense of the value of mental and bodily sanity. And this recognition of the beauty, even for the æsthetic sense, of mere bodily health, now acquired, operated afterwards as an influence morally salutary, counteracting the less desirable or hazardous tendencies of some phases of thought, through which he was to pass.

He came home brown with health to find the health of his mother failing; and about her death, which occurred not long afterwards, there was a circumstance which rested with him as the cruellest touch of all, in an event which for a time seemed to have taken the light out of the sunshine. She died away from home, but sent for him at the last, with a painful effort on her part, but to his great gratitude, pondering, as he always believed, that he might chance otherwise to look back all his life long upon a single fault with something like remorse, and find the burden a great one. For it happened that,

through some sudden, incomprehensible petulance there had been an angry childish gesture, and a slighting word, at the very moment of her departure, actually for the last time. Remembering this he would ever afterwards pray to be saved from offences against his own affections; the thought of that marred parting having peculiar bitterness for one, who set so much store, both by principle and habit, on the sentiment of home.

CHAPTER IV

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

O mare! O littus! verum secretumque Μουσέων,
quam multa invenitis, quam multa dictatis!

Pliny's Letters.

It would hardly have been possible to feel more seriously than did Marius in those grave years of his early life. But the death of his mother turned seriousness of feeling into a matter of the intelligence: it made him a questioner; and, by bringing into full evidence to him the force of his affections and the probable importance of their place in his future, developed in him generally the more human and earthly elements of character. A singularly virile consciousness of the realities of life pronounced itself in him; still however as in the main a poetic apprehension, though united already with something of personal ambition and the instinct of self-assertion. There were days when he could suspect, though it was a suspicion he was careful at first to put from him, that that early, much cherished religion of the villa might come to count with him as but one form of poetic beauty, or of the ideal, in things; as but one voice, in a world where there were many voices it would be a moral weakness not to listen to. And yet this voice, through its forcible preoccupation of his childish conscience, still seemed to make a claim of a quite exclusive character, defining itself as essentially one of but two possible leaders of his spirit, the other proposing to him unlimited self-expansion in a world of various sunshine. The contrast was so pronounced as to make the easy, light-hearted, unsuspecting exercise of himself, among the temptations of the new phase of life which had now begun, seem nothing less than a rival *religion*, a rival *religious* service. The temptations, the various sunshine, were those of the old town of Pisa, where Marius was now a tall schoolboy. Pisa was a place lying just far enough from home to make his rare visits to it in childhood seem like adventures, such as had never failed to supply new and refreshing impulses to the

imagination. The partly decayed pensive town, which still had its commerce by sea, and its fashion at the bathing-season, had left at one time the vivid memory of its fair streets of marble, at another the solemn outline of the dark hills of Luna on its background, at another the living glances of its men and women, to the thickly gathering crowd of impressions, out of which his notion of the world was then forming. And while he learned that the object, the experience, as it will be known to memory, is really from first to last the chief point for consideration in the conduct of life, these things were feeding also the idealism constitutional with him—his innate and habitual longing for a world altogether fairer than that he saw. The child could find his way in thought along those streets of the old town, expecting only the shrines at their corners, and their recurrent intervals of garden-courts, or side-views of distant sea. The great temple of the place, as he could remember it, on turning back once for a last look from an angle of his homeward road, counting its tall gray columns between the blue of the bay and the blue fields of blossoming flax beyond; the harbour and its lights; the foreign ships lying there; the sailors' chapel of Venus, and her gilded image, hung with votive gifts; the seamen themselves, their women and children, who had a whole peculiar colour-world of their own—the boy's superficial delight in the broad light and shadow of all that was mingled with the sense of power, of unknown distance, of the danger of storm and possible death.

To this place, then, Marius came down now from *White-nights*, to live in the house of his guardian or tutor, that he might attend the school of a famous rhetorician, and learn, among other things, Greek. The school, one of many imitations of Plato's Academy in the old Athenian garden, lay in a quiet suburb of Pisa, and had its grove of cypresses, its porticoes, a house for the master, its chapel and images. For the memory of Marius in after-days, a clear morning sunlight seemed to lie perpetually on that severe picture in old gray and green. The lad went to this school daily betimes, in state at first, with a young slave to carry the books, and certainly with no reluctance, for the sight of his fellow-scholars, and their petulant activity, coming upon the sadder sentimental moods of his childhood, awoke at once that instinct of emulation which is but the other side of sympathy; and he was not aware, of course, how completely the difference of his previous training had made him, even in his most enthusiastic participation in the ways of that little world, still essentially but a spectator. While all their heart was in their limited boyish race, and its transitory prizes, he was already entertaining himself, very pleasurably meditative, with the tiny drama in action before him, as but the mimic, preliminary

exercise for a larger contest, and already with an implicit epicureanism. Watching all the gallant effects of their small rivalries—a scene in the main of fresh delightful sunshine—he entered at once into the sensations of a rivalry beyond them, into the passion of men, and had already recognised a certain appetite for fame, for distinction among his fellows, as his dominant motive to be.

The fame he conceived for himself at this time was, as the reader will have anticipated, of the intellectual order, that of a poet perhaps. And as, in that gray monastic tranquillity of the villa, inward voices from the reality of unseen things had come abundantly; so here, with the sounds and aspects of the shore, and amid the urbanities, the graceful follies, of a bathing-place, it was the reality, the tyrannous reality, of things visible that was borne in upon him. The real world around—a present humanity not less comely, it might seem, than that of the old heroic days—endowing everything it touched upon, however remotely, down to its little passing tricks of fashion even, with a kind of fleeting beauty, exercised over him just then a great fascination.

That sense had come upon him in all its power one exceptionally fine summer, the summer when, at a somewhat earlier age than was usual, he had formally assumed the dress of manhood, going into the Forum for that purpose, accompanied by his friends in festal array. At night, after the full measure of those cloudless days, he would feel well-nigh wearied out, as if with a long succession of pictures and music. As he wandered through the gay streets or on the sea-shore, the real world seemed indeed boundless, and himself almost absolutely free with it, with a boundless appetite for experience, for adventure, whether physical or of the spirit. His entire rearing hitherto had lent itself to an imaginative exaltation of the past; but now the spectacle actually afforded to his untired and freely open senses, suggested the reflection that the present had, it might be, really advanced beyond the past, and he was ready to boast in the very fact that it was modern. If, in a voluntary archaism, the polite world of that day went back to a choicer generation, as it fancied, for the purpose of a fastidious self-correction, in matters of art, of literature, and even, as we have seen, of religion, at least it improved, by a shade or two of more scrupulous finish, on the old pattern; and the new era, like the *Neu-zeit* of the German enthusiasts at the beginning of our own century, might perhaps be discerned, awaiting one just a single step onward—the perfected new manner, in the consummation of time, alike as regards the things of the imagination and the actual conduct of life. Only, while the pursuit of an ideal like this demanded entire liberty of heart and brain, that old, staid, conservative religion of his childhood certainly had its being in a world of somewhat narrow restrictions.

But then, the one was absolutely real, with nothing less than the reality of seeing and hearing—the other, how vague, shadowy, problematical! Could its so limited probabilities be worth taking into account in any practical question as to the rejecting or receiving of what was indeed so real, and, on the face of it, so desirable?

And, dating from the time of his first coming to school, a great friendship had grown up for him, in that life of so few attachments—the pure and disinterested friendship of schoolmates. He had seen Flavian for the first time the day on which he had come to Pisa, at the moment when his mind was full of wistful thoughts regarding the new life to begin for him to-morrow, and he gazed curiously at the crowd of bustling scholars as they came from their classes. There was something in Flavian a shade disdainful, as he stood isolated from the others for a moment, explained in part by his stature and the distinction of the low, broad forehead; though there was pleasantness also for the newcomer in the roving blue eyes which seemed somehow to take a fuller hold upon things around than is usual with boys. Marius knew that those proud glances made kindly note of him for a moment, and felt something like friendship at first sight. There was a tone of reserve or gravity there, amid perfectly disciplined health, which, to his fancy, seemed to carry forward the expression of the austere sky and the clear song of the blackbird on that gray March evening. Flavian indeed was a creature who changed much with the changes of the passing light and shade about him, and was brilliant enough under the early sunshine in school next morning. Of all that little world of more or less gifted youth, surely the centre was this lad of servile birth. Prince of the school, he had gained an easy dominion over the old Greek master by the fascination of his parts, and over his fellow-scholars by the figure he bore. He wore already the manly dress; and standing there in class, as he displayed his wonderful quickness in reckoning, or his taste in declaiming Homer, he was like a carved figure in motion, thought Marius, but with that indescribable gleam upon it which the words of Homer actually suggested, as perceptible on the visible forms of the gods—

οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἶεν ἑόντας.

A story hung by him, a story which his comrades acutely connected with his habitual air of somewhat peevish pride. Two points were held to be clear amid its general vagueness—a rich stranger paid his schooling, and he was himself very poor, though there was an attractive piquancy in the poverty of Flavian which in a scholar of another figure might have been despised. Over Marius too his dominion was

entire. Three years older than he, Flavian was appointed to help the younger boy in his studies, and Marius thus became virtually his servant in many things, taking his humours with a sort of grateful pride in being noticed at all, and, thinking over all this afterwards, found that the fascination experienced by him had been a sentimental one, dependent on the concession to himself of an intimacy, a certain tolerance of his company, granted to none beside.

That was in the earliest days; and then, as their intimacy grew, the genius, the intellectual power of Flavian began its sway over him. The brilliant youth who loved dress, and dainty food, and flowers, and seemed to have a natural alliance with, and claim upon, everything else which was physically select and bright, cultivated also that foppery of words, of choice diction, which was common among the *élite* spirits of that day; and Marius, early an expert and elegant penman, transcribed his verses (the euphuism of which, amid a genuine original power, was then so delightful to him) in beautiful ink, receiving in return the profit of Flavian's really great intellectual capacities, developed and accomplished under the ambitious desire to make his way effectively in life. Among other things he introduced him to the writings of a sprightly wit, then very busy with the pen, one Lucian—writings seeming to overflow with that intellectual light turned upon dim places, which, at least in seasons of mental fair weather, can make people laugh where they have been wont, perhaps, to pray. And, surely, the sunlight which filled those well-remembered early mornings in school, had had more than the usual measure of gold in it! Marius, at least, would lie awake before the time, thinking with delight of the long coming hours of hard work in the presence of Flavian, as other boys dream of a holiday.

It was almost by accident at last, so wayward and capricious was he, that reserve gave way, and Flavian told the story of his father—a freedman, presented late in life, and almost against his will, with the liberty so fondly desired in youth, but on condition of the sacrifice of part of his *peculium*—the slave's diminutive hoard—amassed by many a self-denial, in an existence necessarily hard. The rich man, interested in the promise of the fair child born on his estate, had sent him to school. The meanness and dejection, nevertheless, of that unoccupied old age defined the leading memory of Flavian, revived sometimes, after this first confidence, with a burst of angry tears amid the sunshine. But nature had had her economy in nursing the strength of that one natural affection; for, save his half-selfish care for Marius, it was the single, really generous part, the one piety, in the lad's character. In him Marius saw the spirit of unbelief, achieved as if at one step. The much-admired freedman's son, as with the privilege

of a natural aristocracy, believed only in himself, in the brilliant, and mainly sensuous gifts, he had, or meant to acquire.

And then, he had certainly yielded himself, though still with untouched health, in a world where manhood comes early, to the seductions of that luxurious town, and Marius wondered sometimes, in the freer revelation of himself by conversation, at the extent of his early corruption. How often, afterwards, did evil things present themselves in malign association with the memory of that beautiful head, and with a kind of borrowed sanction and charm in its natural grace! To Marius, at a later time, he counted for as it were an epitome of the whole pagan world, the depth of its corruption, and its perfection of form. And still, in his mobility, his animation, in his eager capacity for various life, he was so real an object, after that visionary idealism of the villa. His voice, his glance, were like the breaking in of the solid world upon one, amid the flimsy fictions of a dream. A shadow, handling all things as shadows, had felt a sudden real and poignant heat in them.

Meantime, under his guidance, Marius was learning quickly and abundantly, because with a good will. There was that in the actual effectiveness of his figure which stimulated the younger lad to make the most of opportunity; and he had experience already that education largely increased one's capacity for enjoyment. He was acquiring what it is the chief function of all higher education to impart, the art, namely, of so reliving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction, in our everyday life—of so exclusively living in them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift or *débris* of our days, comes to be as though it were not. And the consciousness of this aim came with the reading of one particular book, then fresh in the world, with which he fell in about this time—a book which awakened the poetic or romantic capacity as perhaps some other book might have done, but was peculiar in giving it a direction emphatically sensuous. It made him, in that visionary reception of every-day life, the seer, more especially, of a revelation in colour and form. If our modern education, in its better efforts, really conveys to any of us that kind of idealising power, it does so (though dealing mainly, as its professed instruments, with the most select and ideal remains of ancient literature) oftenest by truant reading; and thus it happened also, long ago, with Marius and his friend.

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN BOOK

THE two lads were lounging together over a book, half-buried in a heap of dry corn, in an old granary—the quiet corner to which they had climbed out of the way of their noisier companions on one of their blindest holiday afternoons. They looked round: the western sun smote through the broad chinks of the shutters. How like a picture! and it was precisely the scene described in what they were reading, with just that added poetic touch in the book which made it delightful and select, and, in the actual place, the ray of sunlight transforming the rough grain among the cool brown shadows into heaps of gold. What they were intent on was, indeed, the book of books, the “golden” book of that day, a gift to Flavian, as was shown by the purple writing on the handsome yellow wrapper, following the title. *Flaviane!*—it said,

Flaviane!
lege
Feliciter!

Flaviane!
Vivas!
Floreas!

Flaviane!
Vivas!
Gaudeas!

It was perfumed with oil of sandal-wood, and decorated with carved and gilt ivory bosses at the ends of the roller.

And the inside was something not less dainty and fine, full of the archaisms and curious felicities in which that generation delighted, quaint terms and images picked fresh from the early dramatists, the lifelike phrases of some lost poet preserved by an old grammarian, racy morsels of the vernacular and studied prettinesses:—all alike, mere playthings for the genuine power and natural eloquence of the erudite artist, unsuppressed by his erudition, which, however, made some people angry, chiefly less well “got-up” people, and especially those who were untidy from indolence.

No! it was certainly not that old-fashioned, unconscious ease of the early literature, which could never come again; which, after all, had had more in common with the “infinite patience” of Apuleius than with the hack-work readiness of his detractors, who might so well have been “self-conscious” of going slipshod. And at least his success was unmistakable as to the precise literary effect he had intended, including a certain tincture of “neology” in expression—*nonnihil interdum elocutione novella parum signatum*—in the language of Cornelius Fronto, the contemporary prince of rhetoricians. What

words he had found for conveying, with a single touch, the sense of textures, colours, incidents! "Like jewellers' work! Like a myrrhine vase!"—admirers said of his writing. "The golden fibre in the hair, the gold threadwork in the gown marked her as the mistress"—*aurum in comis et in tunicis, ibi inflexum hic intextum, matronam profecto confitebatur*—he writes, with his "curious felicity", of one of his heroines. *Aurum intextum*: gold fibre:—well! there was something of that kind in his own work. And then, in an age when people, from the emperor Aurelius downwards, prided themselves unwisely on writing in Greek, he had written for Latin people in their own tongue; though still, in truth, with all the care of a learned language. Not less happily inventive were the incidents recorded—story within story—stories with the sudden, unlooked-for changes of dreams. He had his humorous touches also. And what went to the ordinary boyish taste, in those somewhat peculiar readers, what would have charmed boys more purely boyish, was the adventure:—the bear loose in the house at night, the wolves storming the farms in winter, the exploits of the robbers, their charming caves, the delightful thrill one had at the question—"Don't you know that these roads are infested by robbers?"

The scene of the romance was laid in Thessaly, the original land of witchcraft, and took one up and down its mountains, and into its old weird towns, haunts of magic and incantation, where all the more genuine appliances of the black art, left behind her by Medea when she fled through that country, were still in use. In the city of Hypata, indeed, nothing seemed to be its true self.—"You might think that through the murmuring of some cadaverous spell, all things had been changed into forms not their own; that there was humanity in the hardness of the stones you stumbled on; that the birds you heard singing were feathered men; that the trees around the walls drew their leaves from a like source. The statues seemed about to move, the walls to speak, the dumb cattle to break out in prophecy; nay! the very sky and the sunbeams, as if they might suddenly cry out." Witches are there who can draw down the moon, or at least the lunar *virus*—that white fluid she sheds, to be found, so rarely, "on high, heathy places: which is a poison. A touch of it will drive men mad."

And in one very remote village lives the sorceress Pamphile, who turns her neighbours into various animals. What true humour in the scene where, after mounting the rickety stairs, Lucius, peeping curiously through a chink in the door, is a spectator of the transformation of the old witch herself into a bird, that she may take flight to the object of her affections—into an owl! "First she stripped off

every rag she had. Then opening a certain chest she took from it many small boxes, and removing the lid of one of them, rubbed herself over for a long time, from head to foot, with an ointment it contained, and after much low muttering to her lamp, began to jerk at last and shake her limbs. And as her limbs moved to and fro, out burst the soft feathers: stout wings came forth to view: the nose grew hard and hooked: her nails were crooked into claws; and Pamphile was an owl. She uttered a queasy screech; and, leaping little by little from the ground, making trial of herself, fled presently, on full wing, out of doors."

By clumsy imitation of this process, Lucius, the hero of the romance, transforms himself, not as he had intended into a showy winged creature, but into the animal which has given name to the book; for throughout it there runs a vein of racy, homely satire on the love of magic then prevalent, curiosity concerning which had led Lucius to meddle with the old woman's appliances. "Be you my Venus," he says to the pretty maidservant who has introduced him to the view of Pamphile, "and let me stand by you a winged Cupid!" and, freely applying the magic ointment, sees himself transformed, "not into a bird, but into an ass!"

Well! the proper remedy for his distress is a supper of roses, could such be found, and many are his quaintly picturesque attempts to come by them at that adverse season; as he contrives to do at last, when, the grotesque procession of Isis passing by with a bear and other strange animals in its train, the ass following along with the rest suddenly crunches the chaplet of roses carried in the High-priest's hand.

Meantime, however, he must wait for the spring, with more than the outside of an ass; "though I was not so much a fool, nor so truly an ass," he tells us, when he happens to be left alone with a daintily spread table, "as to neglect this most delicious fare, and feed upon coarse hay." For, in truth, all through the book, there is an unmistakably real feeling for asses, with bold touches like Swift's, and a genuine animal breadth. Lucius was the original ass, who peeping slyly from the window of his hiding-place forgot all about the big shade he cast just above him, and gave occasion to the joke or proverb about "the peeping ass and his shadow".

But the marvellous, delight in which is one of the really serious elements in most boys, passed at times, those young readers still feeling its fascination, into what French writers call the *macabre*—that species of almost insane preoccupation with the materialities of our mouldering flesh, that luxury of disgust in gazing on corruption, which was connected, in this writer at least, with not a little obvious coarseness. It was a strange notion of the gross lust of the actual world, that Marius

took from some of these episodes. "I am told," they read, "that when foreigners are interred, the old witches are in the habit of outracing the funeral procession, to ravage the corpse"—in order to obtain certain cuttings and remnants from it, with which to injure the living—"especially if the witch has happened to cast her eye upon some goodly young man". And the scene of the night-watching of a dead body lest the witches should come to tear off the flesh with their teeth, is worthy of Théophile Gautier.

But set as one of the episodes in the main narrative, a true gem amid its mockeries, its coarse though genuine humanity, its burlesque horrors, came the tale of Cupid and Psyche, full of brilliant, like-life situations, *speciosa locis*, and abounding in lovely visible imagery (one seemed to see and handle the golden hair, the fresh flowers, the precious works of art in it!) yet full also of a gentle idealism, so that you might take it, if you chose, for an allegory. With a concentration of all his finer literary gifts, Apuleius had gathered into it the floating star-matter of many a delightful old story.—

The story of Cupid and Psyche.

In a certain city lived a king and queen who had three daughters exceeding fair. But the beauty of the elder sisters, though pleasant to behold, yet passed not the measure of human praise, while such was the loveliness of the youngest that men's speech was too poor to commend it worthily and could express it not at all. Many of the citizens and of strangers, whom the fame of this excellent vision had gathered thither, confounded by that matchless beauty, could but kiss the finger-tips of their right hands at sight of her, as in adoration to the goddess Venus herself. And soon a rumour passed through the country that she whom the blue deep had borne, forbearing her divine dignity, was even then moving among men, or that by some fresh germination from the stars, not the sea now, but the earth, had put forth a new Venus, endued with the flower of virginity.

This belief, with the fame of the maiden's loveliness, went daily further into distant lands, so that many people were drawn together to behold that glorious model of the age. Men sailed no longer to Paphos, to Cnidus or Cythera, to the presence of the goddess Venus: her sacred rites were neglected, her images stood uncrowned, the cold ashes left to disfigure her forsaken altars. It was to a maiden that men's prayers were offered, to a human countenance they looked, in propitiating so great a godhead: when the girl went forth in the morning they strewed flowers on her way, and the victims proper to that unseen goddess were presented as she passed along. This

conveyance of divine worship to a mortal kindled meantime the anger of the true Venus. "Lo! now, the ancient parent of nature," she cried, "the fountain of all elements! Behold me, Venus, benign mother of the world, sharing my honours with a mortal maiden, while my name, built up in heaven, is profaned by the mean things of earth! Shall a perishable woman bear my image about with her? In vain did the shepherd of Ida prefer me! Yet shall she have little joy, whosoever she be, of her usurped and unlawful loveliness!" Thereupon she called to her that winged, bold boy, of evil ways, who wanders armed by night through men's houses, spoiling their marriages; and stirring yet more by her speech his inborn wantonness, she led him to the city, and showed him Psyche as she walked.

"I pray thee," she said, "give thy mother a full revenge. Let this maid become the slave of an unworthy love." Then, embracing him closely, she departed to the shore and took her throne upon the crest of the wave. And lo! at her unuttered will, her ocean-servants are in waiting; the daughters of Nereus are there singing their song, and Portunus, and Salacia, and the tiny charioteer of the dolphin, with a host of Tritons leaping through the billows. And one blows softly through his sounding sea-shell, another spreads a silken web against the sun, a third presents the mirror to the eyes of his mistress, while the others swim side by side below, drawing her chariot. Such was the escort of Venus as she went upon the sea.

Psyche meantime, aware of her loveliness, had no fruit thereof. All people regarded and admired, but none sought her in marriage. It was but as on the finished work of the craftsman that they gazed upon that divine likeness. Her sisters, less fair than she, were happily wedded. She, even as a widow, sitting at home, wept over her desolation, hating in her heart the beauty in which all men were pleased.

And the king, supposing the gods were angry, inquired of the oracle of Apollo, and Apollo answered him thus: "Let the damsel be placed on the top of a certain mountain, adorned as for the bed of marriage and of death. Look not for a son-in-law of mortal birth; but for that evil serpent-thing, by reason of whom even the gods tremble and the shadows of Styx are afraid."

So the king returned home and made known the oracle to his wife. For many days she lamented, but at last the fulfilment of the divine precept is urgent upon her, and the company make ready to conduct the maiden to her deadly bridal. And now the nuptial torch gathers dark smoke and ashes: the pleasant sound of the pipe is changed into a cry: the marriage hymn concludes in a sorrowful wailing; below her yellow wedding-veil the bride shook away her tears; insomuch that the whole city was afflicted together at the ill-luck of the stricken house.

But the mandate of the god impelled the hapless Psyche to her fate, and, these solemnities being ended, the funeral of the living soul goes forth, all the people following. Psyche, bitterly weeping, assists not at her marriage but at her own obsequies, and while the parents hesitate to accomplish a thing so unholy the daughter cries to them: "Wherefore torment your luckless age by long weeping? This was the prize of my extraordinary beauty! When all people celebrated us with divine honours, and in one voice named the New Venus, it was then ye should have wept for me as one dead. Now at last I understand that that one name of Venus has been my ruin. Lead me and set me upon the appointed place. I am in haste to submit to that well-omened marriage, to behold that goodly spouse. Why delay the coming of him who was born for the destruction of the whole world?"

She was silent, and with firm step went on the way. And they proceeded to the appointed place on a steep mountain, and left there the maiden alone, and took their way homewards dejectedly. The wretched parents, in their close-shut house, yielded themselves to perpetual night; while to Psyche, fearful and trembling and weeping sore upon the mountain-top, comes the gentle Zephyrus. He lifts her mildly, and, with vesture afloat on either side, bears her by his own soft breathing over the windings of the hills, and sets her lightly among the flowers in the bosom of a valley below.

Psyche, in those delicate grassy places, lying sweetly on her dewy bed, rested from the agitation of her soul and arose in peace. And lo! a grove of mighty trees, with a fount of water, clear as glass, in the midst; and hard by the water, a dwelling-place, built not by human hands but by some divine cunning. One recognised, even at the entering, the delightful hostelry of a god. Golden pillars sustained the roof, arched most curiously in cedar-wood and ivory. The walls were hidden under wrought silver:—all tame and woodland creatures leaping forward to the visitor's gaze. Wonderful indeed was the craftsman, divine or half-divine, who by the subtlety of his art had breathed so wild a soul into the silver! The very pavement was distinct with pictures in goodly stones. In the glow of its precious metal the house is its own daylight, having no need of the sun. Well might it seem a place fashioned for the conversation of gods with men!

Psyche, drawn forward by the delight of it, came near, and, her courage growing, stood within the doorway. One by one, she admired the beautiful things she saw; and, most wonderful of all! no lock, no chain, nor living guardian protected that great treasure house. But as she gazed there came a voice—a voice, as it were unclothed of bodily vesture—"Mistress!" it said, "all these things are thine. Lie down, and relieve thy weariness, and rise again for the bath when thou wilt. We

thy servants, whose voice thou hearest, will be beforehand with our service, and a royal feast shall be ready."

And Psyche understood that some divine care was providing, and, refreshed with sleep and the bath, sat down to the feast. Still she saw no one: only she heard words falling here and there, and had voices alone to serve her. And the feast being ended, one entered the chamber and sang to her unseen, while another struck the chords of a harp, invisible with him who played on it. Afterwards the sound of a company singing together came to her, but still so that none was present to sight; yet it appeared that a great multitude of singers was there.

And the hour of evening inviting her, she climbed into the bed; and as the night was far advanced, behold a sound of a certain clemency approaches her. Then, fearing for her maidenhood in so great solitude, she trembled, and more than any evil she knew dreaded that she knew not. And now the husband, that unknown husband, drew near, and ascended the couch, and made her his wife; and lo! before the rise of dawn he had departed hastily. And the attendant voices ministered to the needs of the newly married. And so it happened with her for a long season. And as nature has willed, this new thing, by continual use, became a delight to her: the sound of the voice grew to be her solace in that condition of loneliness and uncertainty.

One night the bridegroom spoke thus to his beloved, "O Psyche, most pleasant bride! Fortune is grown stern with us, and threatens thee with mortal peril. Thy sisters troubled at the report of thy death, and seeking some trace of thee, will come to the mountain's top. But if by chance their cries reach thee, answer not, neither look forth at all, lest thou bring sorrow upon me and destruction upon thyself." Then Psyche promised that she would do according to his will. But the bridegroom was fled away again with the night. And all that day she spent in tears, repeating that she was now dead indeed, shut up in that golden prison, powerless to console her sisters sorrowing after her, or to see their faces; and so went to rest weeping.

And after a while came the bridegroom again, and lay down beside her, and embracing her as she wept, complained, "Was this thy promise, my Psyche? What have I to hope from thee? Even in the arms of thy husband thou ceaseest not from pain. Do now as thou wilt. Indulge thine own desire, though it seeks what will ruin thee. Yet wilt thou remember my warning, repentant too late." Then, protesting that she is like to die, she obtains from him that he suffer her to see her sisters, and present to them moreover what gifts she would of golden ornaments; but therewith he oftentimes advised her never at any time, yielding to pernicious counsel, to enquire con-

cerning his bodily form, lest she fall. through unholy curiosity, from so great a height of fortune, nor feel ever his embrace again. "I would die a hundred times," she said, cheerful at last, "rather than be deprived of thy most sweet usage. I love thee as my own soul, beyond comparison even with Love himself. Only bid thy servant Zephyrus bring hither my sisters, as he brought me. My honeycomb! My husband! Thy Psyche's breath of life!" So he promised; and after the embraces of the night, ere the light appeared, vanished from the hands of his bride.

And the sisters, coming to the place where Psyche was abandoned, wept loudly among the rocks, and called upon her by name, so that the sound came down to her, and running out of the palace distraught, she cried, "Wherefore afflict your souls with lamentation? I whom you mourn am here." Then, summoning Zephyrus, she reminded him of her husband's bidding; and he bare them down with a gentle blast. "Enter now," she said, "into my house, and relieve your sorrow in the company of Psyche your sister."

And Psyche displayed to them all the treasures of the golden house, and its great family of ministering voices, nursing in them the malice which was already at their hearts. And at last one of them asks curiously who the lord of that celestial array may be, and what manner of man her husband? And Psyche answered dissemblingly, "A young man, handsome and mannerly, with a goodly beard. For the most part he hunts upon the mountains." And lest the secret should slip from her in the way of further speech, loading her sisters with gold and gems, she commanded Zephyrus to bear them away.

And they returned home, on fire with envy. "See now the injustice of fortune!" cried one. "We, the elder children, are given like servants to be the wives of strangers, while the youngest is possessed of so great riches, who scarcely knows how to use them. You saw, Sister! what a hoard of wealth lies in the house; what glittering gowns; what splendour of precious gems, besides all that gold trodden under foot. If she indeed hath, as she said, a bridegroom so goodly, then no one in all the world is happier. And it may be that this husband, being of divine nature, will make her too a goddess. Nay! so in truth it is. It was even thus she bore herself. Already she looks aloft and breathes divinity, who, though but a woman, has voices for her handmaidens, and can command the winds." "Think," answered the other, "how arrogantly she dealt with us, grudging us these trifling gifts out of all that store, and when our company became a burden, causing us to be hissed and driven away from her through the air! But I am no woman if she keep her hold on this great fortune; and if the insult done us has touched thee too, take we counsel together. Meanwhile let us hold our peace, and know nought of her, alive or dead. For they

are not truly happy of whose happiness other folk are unaware."

And the bridegroom, whom still she knows not, warns her thus a second time, as he talks with her by night: "Seest thou what peril besets thee? Those cunning wolves have made ready for thee their snares, of which the sum is that they persuade thee to search into the fashion of my countenance, the seeing of which, as I have told thee often, will be the seeing of it no more for ever. But do thou neither listen nor make answer to aught regarding thy husband. Besides, we have sown also the seed of our race. Even now this bosom grows with a child to be born to us, a child, if thou but keep our secret, of divine quality; if thou profane it, subject to death." And Psyche was glad at the tidings, rejoicing in that solace of a divine seed, and in the glory of that pledge of love to be, and the dignity of the name of mother. Anxiously she notes the increase of the days, the waning months. And again, as he tarries briefly beside her, the bridegroom repeats his warning: "Even now the sword is drawn with which thy sisters seek thy life. Have pity on thyself, sweet wife, and upon our child, and see not those evil women again." But the sisters make their way into the palace once more, crying to her in wily tones, "O Psyche! and thou too wilt be a mother! How great will be the joy at home! Happy indeed shall we be to have the nursing of the golden child. Truly if he be answerable to the beauty of his parents, it will be a birth of Cupid himself."

So, little by little, they stole upon the heart of their sister. She, meanwhile, bids the lyre to sound for their delight, and the playing is heard; she bids the pipes to move, the quire to sing, and the music and the singing come invisibly, scothing the mind of the listener with sweetest modulation. Yet not even thereby was their malice put to sleep: once more they seek to know what manner of husband she has, and whence that seed. And Psyche, simple over-much, forgetful of her first story, answers, "My husband comes from a far country, trading for great sums. He is already of middle age, with whitening locks." And therewith she dismisses them again.

And returning home upon the soft breath of Zephyrus one cried to the other, "What shall be said of so ugly a lie? He who was a young man with goodly beard is now in middle life. It must be that she told a false tale: else is she in very truth ignorant what manner of man he is. Howsoever it be, let us destroy her quickly. For if she indeed knows not, be sure that her bridegroom is one of the gods: it is a god she bears in her womb. And let that be far from us! If she be called mother of a god, then will life be more than I can bear."

So, full of rage against her, they returned to Psyche, and said to her craftily, "Thou livest in an ignorant bliss, all incurious of thy

real danger. It is a deadly serpent, as we certainly know, that comes to sleep at thy side. Remember the words of the oracle, which declared thee destined to a cruel beast. There are those who have seen it at nightfall, coming back from its feeding. In no long time, they say, it will end its blandishments. It but waits for the babe to be formed in thee, that it may devour thee by so much the richer. If indeed the solitude of this musical place, or it may be the loathsome commerce of a hidden love, delight thee, we at least in sisterly piety have done our part." And at last the unhappy Psyche, simple and frail of soul, carried away by the terror of their words, losing memory of her husband's precepts and her own promise, brought upon herself a great calamity. Trembling and turning pale, she answers them, "And they who tell these things, it may be, speak the truth. For in very deed never have I seen the face of my husband, nor know I at all what manner of man he is. Always he frights me diligently from the sight of him, threatening some great evil should I too curiously look upon his face. Do ye, if ye can help your sister in her great peril, stand by her now."

Her sisters answered her, "The way of safety we have well considered, and will teach thee. Take a sharp knife, and hide it in that part of the couch where thou art wont to lie: take also a lamp filled with oil, and set it privily behind the curtain. And when he shall have drawn up his coils into the accustomed place, and thou hearest him breathe in sleep, slip then from his side and discover the lamp, and, knife in hand, put forth thy strength, and strike off the serpent's head." And so they departed in haste.

And Psyche left alone (alone but for the furies which beset her) is tossed up and down in her distress, like a wave of the sea; and though her will is firm, yet, in the moment of putting hand to the deed, she falters, and is torn asunder by various apprehension of the great calamity upon her. She hastens and anon delays, now full of distrust, and now of angry courage: under one bodily form she loathes the monster and loves the bridegroom. But twilight ushers in the night; and at length in haste she makes ready for the terrible deed. Darkness came, and the bridegroom; and he first, after some faint essay of love, falls into a deep sleep.

And she, erewhile of no strength, the hard purpose of destiny assisting her, is confirmed in force. With lamp plucked forth, knife in hand, she put by her sex; and lo! as the secrets of the bed became manifest, the sweetest and most gentle of all creatures, Love himself, reclined there, in his own proper loveliness! At sight of him the very flame of the lamp kindled more gladly! But Psyche was afraid of the vision, and, faint of soul, trembled back upon her knees, and would

have hidden the steel in her own bosom. But the knife slipped from her hand; and now, undone, yet oftentimes looking upon the beauty of that divine countenance, she lives again. She sees the locks of that golden head, pleasant with the unction of the gods, shed down in graceful entanglement, behind and before, about the ruddy cheeks and white throat. The pinions of the winged god, yet fresh with the dew, are spotless upon his shoulders, the delicate plumage wavering over them as they lie at rest. Smooth he was, and, touched with light, worthy of Venus, his mother. At the foot of the couch lay his bow and arrows, the instruments of his power, propitious to men.

And Psyche, gazing hungrily thereon, draws an arrow from the quiver, and trying the point upon her thumb, tremulous still, drave in the barb, so that a drop of blood came forth. Thus fell she, by her own act, and unaware, into the love of Love. Falling upon the bridegroom, with indrawn breath, in a hurry of kisses from eager and open lips, she shuddered as she thought how brief that sleep might be. And it chanced that a drop of burning oil fell from the lamp upon the god's shoulder. Ah! maladroitness minister of love, thus to wound him from whom all fire comes; though 'twas a lover, I trow, first devised thee, to have the fruit of his desire even in the darkness! At the touch of the fire the god started up, and beholding the overthrow of her faith, quietly took flight from her embraces.

And Psyche, as he rose upon the wing, laid hold on him with her two hands, hanging upon him in his passage through the air, till she sinks to the earth through weariness. And as she lay there, the divine lover, tarrying still, lighted upon a cypress tree which grew near, and, from the top of it, spake thus to her, in great emotion. "Foolish one! unmindful of the command of Venus, my mother, who had devoted thee to one of base degree, I fled to thee in his stead. Now know I that this was vainly done. Into mine own flesh pierced mine arrow, and I made thee my wife, only that I might seem a monster beside thee—that thou shouldst seek to wound the head wherein lay the eyes so full of love to thee! Again and again, I thought to put thee on thy guard concerning these things, and warned thee in loving-kindness. Now I would but punish thee by my flight hence." And therewith he winged his way into the deep sky.

Psyche, prostrate upon the earth, and following far as sight might reach the flight of the bridegroom, wept and lamented; and when the breadth of space had parted him wholly from her, cast herself down upon the bank of a river which was nigh. But the stream, turning gentle in honour of the god, put her forth again unhurt upon its margin. And as it happened, Pan, the rustic god, was sitting just then by the waterside, embracing, in the body of a reed, the goddess

Canna; teaching her to respond to him in all varieties of slender sound. Hard by, his flock of goats browsed at will. And the shaggy god called her, wounded and outworn, kindly to him and said, "I am but a rustic herdsman, pretty maiden, yet wise, by favour of my great age and long experience; and if I guess truly by those faltering steps, by thy sorrowful eyes and continual sighing, thou labourest with excess of love. Listen then to me, and seek not death again, in the stream or otherwise. Put aside thy woe, and turn thy prayers to Cupid. He is in truth a delicate youth: win him by the delicacy of thy service."

So the shepherd-god spoke, and Psyche, answering nothing, but with a reverence to his serviceable deity, went on her way. And while she, in her search after Cupid, wandered through many lands, he was lying in the chamber of his mother, heart-sick. And the white bird which floats over the waves plunged in haste into the sea, and approaching Venus, as she bathed, made known to her that her son lies afflicted with some grievous hurt, doubtful of life. And Venus cried, angrily, "My son, then, has a mistress! And it is Psyche, who witched away my beauty and was the rival of my godhead, whom he loves!"

Therewith she issued from the sea, and returning to her golden chamber, found there the lad, sick, as she had heard, and cried from the doorway, "Well done, truly! to trample thy mother's precepts under foot, to spare my enemy that cross of an unworthy love; nay, unite her to thyself, child as thou art, that I might have a daughter-in-law who hates me! I will make thee repent of thy sport, and the savour of thy marriage bitter. There is one who shall chasten this body of thine, put out thy torch and unstring thy bow. Not till she has plucked forth that hair, into which so oft these hands have smoothed the golden light, and sheared away thy wings, shall I feel the injury done me avenged." And with this she hastened in anger from the doors.

And Ceres and Juno met her, and sought to know the meaning of her troubled countenance. "Ye come in season," she cried; "I pray you, find for me Psyche. It must needs be that ye have heard the disgrace of my house." And they, ignorant of what was done, would have soothed her anger, saying, "What fault, Mistress, hath thy son committed, that thou wouldst destroy the girl he loves? Knowest thou not that he is now of age? Because he wears his years so lightly must he seem to thee ever but a child? Wilt thou for ever thus pry into the pastimes of thy son, always accusing his wantonness, and blaming in him those delicate wiles which are all thine own?" Thus, in secret fear of the boy's bow, did they seek to please him with their gracious patronage. But Venus, angry at their light taking of her

wrongs, turned her back upon them, and with hasty steps made her way once more to the sea.

Meanwhile Psyche, tost in soul, wandering hither and thither, rested not night or day in the pursuit of her husband, desiring, if she might not soothe his anger by the endearments of a wife, at the least to propitiate him with the prayers of a handmaid. And seeing a certain temple on the top of a high mountain, she said, "Who knows whether yonder place be not the abode of my lord?" Thither, therefore, she turned her steps, hastening now the more because desire and hope pressed her on, weary as she was with the labours of the way, and so, painfully measuring out the highest ridges of the mountain, drew near to the sacred couches. She sees ears of wheat, in heaps or twisted into chaplets; ears of barley also, with sickles and all the instruments of harvest, lying there in disorder, thrown at random from the hands of the labourers in the great heat. These she curiously sets apart, one by one, duly ordering them; for she said within herself, "I may not neglect the shrines, nor the holy service, of any god there be, but must rather win by supplication the kindly mercy of them all."

And Ceres found her bending sadly upon her task, and cried aloud, "Alas, Psyche! Venus, in the furiousness of her anger, tracks thy footsteps through the world, seeking for thee to pay her the utmost penalty; and thou, thinking of anything rather than thine own safety, hast taken on thee the care of what belongs to me!" Then Psyche fell down at her feet, and sweeping the floor with her hair, washing the footsteps of the goddess in her tears, besought her mercy, with many prayers:—"By the gladdening rites of harvest, by the lighted lamps and mystic marches of the Marriage and mysterious Invention of thy daughter Proserpine, and by all beside that the holy place of Attica veils in silence, minister, I pray thee, to the sorrowful heart of Psyche! Suffer me to hide myself but for a few days among the heaps of corn, till time have softened the anger of the goddess, and my strength, out-worn in my long travail, be recovered by a little rest."

But Ceres answered her, "Truly thy tears move me, and I would fain help thee; only I dare not incur the ill-will of my kinswoman. Depart hence as quickly as may be." And Psyche, repelled against hope, afflicted now with twofold sorrow, making her way back again, beheld among the half-lighted woods of the valley below a sanctuary builded with cunning art. And that she might lose no way of hope, howsoever doubtful, she drew near to the sacred doors. She sees there gifts of price, and garments fixed upon the door-posts and to the branches of the trees, wrought with letters of gold which told the name of the goddess to whom they were dedicated, with thanksgiving for that she had done. So, with bent knee and hands laid about

the glowing altar, she prayed saying, "Sister and spouse of Jupiter! be thou to these my desperate fortunes, Juno the Auspicious! I know that thou dost willingly help those in travail with child; deliver me from the peril that is upon me." And as she prayed thus, Juno in the majesty of her godhead, was straightway present, and answered, "Would that I might incline favourably to thee; but against the will of Venus, whom I have ever loved as a daughter, I may not, for very shame, grant thy prayer."

And Psyche, dismayed by this new shipwreck of her hope, communed thus with herself, "Whither, from the midst of the snares that beset me, shall I take my way once more? In what dark solitude shall I hide me from the all-seeing eye of Venus? What if I put on at length a man's courage, and yielding myself unto her as my mistress, soften by a humility not yet too late the fierceness of her purpose? Who knows but that I may find him also whom my soul seeketh after, in the abode of his mother?"

And Venus, renouncing all earthly aid in her search, prepared to return to heaven. She ordered the chariot to be made ready, wrought for her by Vulcan as a marriage-gift, with a cunning of hand which had left his work so much the richer by the weight of gold it lost under his tool. From the multitude which housed about the bed-chamber of their mistress, white doves came forth, and with joyful motions bent their painted necks beneath the yoke. Behind it, with playful riot, the sparrows sped onward, and other birds sweet of song, making known by their soft notes the approach of the goddess. Eagle, and cruel hawk alarmed not the quireful family of Venus. And the clouds broke away, as the uttermost ether opened to receive her, daughter and goddess, with great joy.

And Venus passed straightway to the house of Jupiter to beg from him the service of Mercury, the god of speech. And Jupiter refused not her prayer. And Venus and Mercury descended from heaven together; and as they went, the former said to the latter, "Thou knowest, my brother of Arcady, that never at any time have I done anything without thy help; for how long time, moreover, I have sought a certain maiden in vain. And now nought remains but that, by thy heraldry, I proclaim a reward for whomsoever shall find her. Do thou my bidding quickly." And therefore she conveyed to him a little scrip, in the which was written the name of Psyche, with other things; and so returned home.

And Mercury failed not in his office; but departing into all lands, proclaimed that whosoever delivered up to Venus the fugitive girl, should receive from herself seven kisses—one thereof full of the inmost honey of her throats. With that the doubt of Psyche was ended. And

now, as she came near to the doors of Venus, one of the household, whose name was Use-and-Wont, ran out to her, crying, "Hast thou learned, Wicked Maid! now at last! that thou hast a mistress?" and seizing her roughly by the hair, drew her into the presence of Venus. And when Venus saw her, she cried out, saying, "Thou hast deigned then to make thy salutations to thy mother-in-law. Now will I in turn treat thee as becometh a dutiful daughter-in-law!"

And she took barley and millet and poppy-seed, every kind of grain and seed, and mixed them together, and laughed, and said to her: "Methinks so plain a maiden can earn lovers only by industrious ministry: now will I also make trial of thy service. Sort me this heap of seed, the one kind from the others, grain by grain; and get thy task done before the evening." And Psyche, stunned by the cruelty of her bidding, was silent, and moved not her hand to the inextricable heap. And there came forth a little ant, which had understanding of the difficulty of her task, and took pity upon the consort of the god of Love; and he ran deftly hither and thither, and called together the whole army of his fellows. "Have pity," he cried, "nimble scholars of the Earth, Mother of all things!—have pity upon the wife of Love, and hasten to help her in her perilous effort." Then, one upon the other, the hosts of the insect people hurried together; and they sorted asunder the whole heap of seed, separating every grain after its kind, and so departed quickly out of sight.

And at nightfall Venus returned, and seeing that task finished with so wonderful diligence, she cried, "The work is not thine, thou naughty maid, but his in whose eyes thou hast found favour." And calling her again in the morning, "See now the grove," she said, "beyond yonder torrent. Certain sheep feed there, whose fleeces shine with gold. Fetch me straightway a lock of that precious stuff, having gotten it as thou mayst."

And Psyche went forth willingly, not to obey the command of Venus, but even to seek a rest from her labour in the depths of the river. But from the river, the green reed, lowly mother of music, spake to her: "O Psyche! pollute not these waters by self-destruction, nor approach that terrible flock; for, as the heat groweth, they wax fierce. Lie down under yon plane-tree, till the quiet of the river's breath have soothed them. Thereafter thou mayst shake down the fleecy gold from the trees of the grove, for it holdeth by the leaves."

And Psyche, instructed thus by the simple reed, in the humanity of its heart, filled her bosom with the soft golden stuff, and returned to Venus. But the goddess smiled bitterly, and said to her, "Well know I who was the author of this thing also. I will make further trial of thy discretion, and the boldness of thy heart. Seest thou the

utmost peak of yonder steep mountain? The dark stream which flows down thence waters the Stygian fields, and swells the flood of Cocytus. Bring me now, in this little urn, a draught from its innermost source." And therewith she put into her hands a vessel of wrought crystal.

And Psyche set forth in haste on her way to the mountain, looking there at last to find the end of her hapless life. But when she came to the region which borders on the cliff that was showed to her, she understood the deadly nature of her task. From a great rock, steep and slippery, a horrible river of water poured forth, falling straightway by a channel exceeding narrow into the unseen gulf below. And lo! creeping from the rocks on either hand, angry serpents, with their long necks and sleepless eyes. The very waters found a voice and bade her depart, in smothered cries of, *Depart hence!* and *What doest thou here? Look around thee!* and *Destruction is upon thee!* And then sense left her, in the immensity of her peril, as one changed to stone.

Yet not even then did the distress of this innocent soul escape the steady eye of a gentle providence. For the bird of Jupiter spread his wings and took flight to her, and asked her, "Didst thou think, simple one, even thou! that thou couldst steal one drop of that relentless stream, the holy river of Styx, terrible even to the gods? But give me thine urn." And the bird took the urn, and filled it at the source, and returned to her quickly from among the teeth of the serpents, bringing with him of the waters, all unwilling—nay! warning him to depart away and not molest them.

And she, receiving the urn with great joy, ran back quickly that she might deliver it to Venus, and yet again satisfied not the angry goddess. "My child!" she said, "in this one thing further must thou serve me. Take now this tiny casket, and get thee down even unto hell, and deliver it to Proserpine. Tell her that Venus would have of her beauty so much at least as may suffice for but one day's use, that beauty she possessed erewhile being foreworn and spoiled, through her tendance upon the sick-bed of her son; and be not slow in returning."

And Psyche perceived there the last ebbing of her fortune—that she was now thrust openly upon death, who must go down, of her own motion, to Hades and the Shades. And straightway she climbed to the top of an exceeding high tower, thinking within herself, "I will cast myself down thence: so shall I descend most quickly into the kingdom of the dead." And the tower, again, broke forth into speech: "Wretched Maid! Wretched Maid! Wilt thou indeed go down into Hades, but by no means return hither. Listen to me. Among the

pathless wilds not far from this place lies a certain mountain, and therein one of hell's vent-holes. Through the breach a rough way lies open, following which thou wilt come, by straight course, to the castle of Orcus. And thou must not go empty-handed. Take in each hand a morsel of barley-bread, soaked in hydromel; and in thy mouth two pieces of money. And when thou shalt be now well onward in the way of death, then wilt thou overtake a lame ass laden with wood, and a lame driver, who will pray thee reach him certain cords to fasten the burden which is falling from the ass: but be thou cautious to pass on in silence. And soon as thou comest to the river of the dead, Charon, in that crazy bark he hath, will put thee over upon the further side. There is greed even among the dead: and thou shalt deliver to him, for the ferrying, one of those two pieces of money, in such wise that he take it with his hand from between thy lips. And as thou passest over the stream, a dead old man, rising on the water, will put up to thee his mouldering hands, and pray thee draw him into the ferry-boat. But beware thou yield not to unlawful pity.

"When thou shalt be come over, and art upon the causeway, certain aged women, spinning, will cry to thee to lend thy hand to their work; and beware again that thou take no part therein; for this also is the snare of Venus, whereby she would cause thee to cast away one at least of those cakes thou bearest in thy hands. And think not that a slight matter; for the loss of either one of them will be to thee the losing of the light of day. For a watch-dog exceeding fierce lies ever before the threshold of that lonely house of Proserpine. Close his mouth with one of thy cakes; so shalt thou pass by him, and enter straightway into the presence of Proserpine herself. Then do thou deliver thy message, and taking what she shall give thee, return back again; offering to the watch-dog the other cake, and to the ferryman that other piece of money thou hast in thy mouth. After this manner mayst thou return again beneath the stars. But withal, I charge thee, think not to look into, nor open, the casket thou bearest, with that treasure of the beauty of the divine countenance hidden therein."

So spake the stones of the tower; and Psyche delayed not, but proceeding diligently after the manner enjoined, entered into the house of Proserpine, at whose feet she sat down humbly, and would neither the delicate couch nor that divine food the goddess offered her, but did straightway the business of Venus. And Proserpine filled the casket secretly, and shut the lid, and delivered it to Psyche, who fled therewith from Hades with new strength. But coming back into the light of day, even as she hastened now to the ending of her service, she was seized with a rash curiosity. "Lo! now," she said within

herself, "my simpleness! who bearing in my hands the divine loveliness, need not to touch myself with a particle at least therefrom, that I may please the more, by the favour of it, my fair one, my beloved." Even as she spoke, she lifted the lid; and behold! within, neither beauty, nor anything beside, save sleep only, the sleep of the dead, which took hold upon her, filling all her members with its drowsy vapour, so that she lay down in the way and moved not, as in the slumber of death.

And Cupid being healed of his wound, because he would endure no longer the absence of her he loved, gliding through the narrow window of the chamber wherein he was holden, his pinions being now repaired by a little rest, fled forth swiftly upon them, and coming to the place where Psyche was, shook that sleep away from her, and set her in his prison again, awaking her with the innocent point of his arrow. "Lo! thine old error again," he said, "which had like once more to have destroyed thee! But do thou now what is lacking of the command of my mother: the rest shall be my care." With these words, the lover rose upon the air; and being consumed inwardly with the greatness of his love, penetrated with vehement wing into the highest place of heaven, to lay his cause before the father of the gods. And the father of gods took his hand in his, and kissed his face, and said to him, "At no time, my son, hast thou regarded me with due honour. Often hast thou vexed my bosom, wherein lies the disposition of the stars, with those busy darts of thine. Nevertheless, because thou hast grown up between these mine hands, I will accomplish thy desire." And straightway he bade Mercury call the gods together; and, the council-chamber being filled, sitting upon a high throne, "Ye gods," he said, "all ye whose names are in the white book of the Muses, ye know yonder lad. It seems good to me that his youthful heats should by some means be restrained. And that all occasion may be taken from him, I would even confine him in the bonds of marriage. He has chosen and embraced a mortal maiden. Let him have fruit of his love, and possess her for ever."

Thereupon he bade Mercury produce Psyche in heaven; and holding out to her his ambrosial cup, "Take it," he said, "and live for ever; nor shall Cupid ever depart from thee." And the gods sat down together to the marriage-feast. On the first couch lay the bridegroom, and Psyche in his bosom. His rustic serving-boy bare the wine to Jupiter; and Bacchus to the rest. The Seasons crimsoned all things with their roses. Apollo sang to the lyre, while a little Pan prattled on his reeds, and Venus danced very sweetly to the soft music. Thus, with due rites, did Psyche pass into the power of Cupid; and from them was born the daughter whom men called Voluptas.

CHAPTER VI

EUPHUISM

So the famous story composed itself in the memory of Marius, with an expression changed in some ways from the original and on the whole graver. The petulant, boyish Cupid of Apuleius was become more like that "Lord, of terrible aspect", who stood at Dante's bedside and wept, or had at least grown to the manly earnestness of the *Erôs* of Praxiteles. Set in relief amid the coarser matter of the book, this episode of Cupid and Psyche served to combine many lines of meditation, already familiar to Marius, into the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centred upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean—an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts, though he valued it at various times in different degrees. The human body in its beauty, as the highest potency of all the beauty of material objects, seemed to him just then to be matter no longer, but, having taken celestial fire, to assert itself as indeed the true, though visible, soul or spirit in things. In contrast with that ideal, in all the pure brilliancy, and as it were in the happy light, of youth and morning and the springtide, men's actual loves, with which at many points the book brings one into close contact, might appear to him, like the general tenor of their lives, to be somewhat mean and sordid. The *hiddenness* of perfect things: a shrinking mysticism, a sentiment of diffidence like that expressed in Psyche's so tremulous hope concerning the child to be born of the husband she has never yet seen—"in the face of this little child, at the least, shall I apprehend thine"—*in hoc saltem parvulo cognoscam faciem tuam*: the fatality which seems to haunt any signal beauty, whether moral or physical, as if it were in itself something illicit and isolating: the suspicion and hatred it so often excites in the vulgar:—these were some of the impressions, forming, as they do, a constant tradition of somewhat cynical pagan experience, from Medusa and Helen downwards, which the old story enforced on him. A book, like a person, has its fortunes with one; is lucky or unlucky in the precise moment of its falling in our way, and often by some happy accident counts with us for something more than its independent value. The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, coming to Marius just then, figured for him as indeed *The Golden Book*: he felt a sort of personal gratitude to its writer, and saw in it doubtless far more than was really there for any other reader. It occupied always a peculiar place in his remembrance, never quite losing its power in frequent return to it for the revival of that first glowing impression.

Its effect upon the elder youth was a more practical one: it stimulated the literary ambition, already so strong a motive with him, by a signal example of success, and made him more than ever an ardent, indefatigable student of words, of the means or instrument of the literary art. The secrets of utterance, of expression itself, of that through which alone any intellectual or spiritual power within one can actually take effect upon others, to over-awe or charm them to one's side, presented themselves to this ambitious lad in immediate connexion with that desire for predominance, for the satisfaction of which another might have relied on the acquisition and display of brilliant military qualities. In him, a fine instinctive sentiment of the exact value and power of words was connate with the eager longing for sway over his fellows. He saw himself already a gallant and effective leader, innovating or conservative as occasion might require, in the rehabilitation of the mother-tongue, then fallen so tarnished and languid; yet the sole object, as he mused within himself, of the only sort of patriotic feeling proper, or possible, for one born of slaves. The popular speech was gradually departing from the form and rule of literary language, a language always and increasingly artificial. While the learned dialect was yearly becoming more and more barbarously pedantic, the colloquial idiom, on the other hand, offered a thousand chance-tost gems of racy or picturesque expression, rejected or at least ungathered by what claimed to be classical Latin. The time was coming when neither the pedants nor the people would really understand Cicero; though there were some indeed, like this new writer, Apuleius, who, departing from the custom of writing in Greek, which had been a fashionable affectation among the sprightlier wits since the days of Hadrian, had written in the vernacular.

The literary programme which Flavian had already designed for himself would be a work, then, partly conservative or reactionary, in its dealing with the instrument of the literary art; partly popular and revolutionary, asserting, so to term them, the rights of the *proletariate* of speech. More than fifty years before, the younger Pliny, himself an effective witness for the delicate power of the Latin tongue, had said, "I am one of those who admire the ancients, yet I do not, like some others, underrate certain instances of genius which our own times afford. For it is not true that nature, as if weary and effete, no longer produces what is admirable." And he, Flavian, would prove himself the true master of the opportunity thus indicated. In his eagerness for a not too distant fame, he dreamed over all that, as the young Caesar may have dreamed of campaigns. Others might brutalise or neglect the native speech, that true "open field" for charm and sway over men. He would make of it a serious study, weighing the

precise power of every phrase and word, as though it were precious metal, disentangling the later associations and going back to the original and native sense of each,—restoring to full significance all its wealth of latent figurative expression, reviving or replacing its outworn or tarnished images. Latin literature and the Latin tongue were dying of routine and languor; and what was necessary, first of all, was to re-establish the natural and direct relationship between thought and expression, between the sensation and the term, and restore to words their primitive power.

For words, after all, words manipulated with all his delicate force, were to be the apparatus of a war for himself. To be forcibly impressed, in the first place; and in the next, to find the means of making visible to others that which was vividly apparent, delightful, of lively interest to himself, to the exclusion of all that was but middling, tame, or only half-true even to him—this scrupulousness of literary art actually awoke in Flavian, for the first time, a sort of chivalrous conscience. What care for style! what patience of execution! what research for the significant tone of ancient idiom—*sonantia verba et antiqua!* What stately and regular word-building—*gravis et decora constructio!* He felt the whole meaning of the sceptical Pliny's somewhat melancholy advice to one of his friends, that he should seek in literature deliverance from mortality—*ut studiis se literarum a mortalitate vindicet*. And there was everything in the nature and the training of Marius to make him a full participator in the hopes of such a new literary school, with Flavian for its leader. In the refinements of that curious spirit, in its horror of profanities, its fastidious sense of a correctness in external form, there was something which ministered to the old ritual interest, still surviving in him; as if here indeed were involved a kind of sacred service to the mother-tongue.

Here, then, was the theory of Euphuism, as manifested in every age in which the literary conscience has been awakened to forgotten duties towards language, towards the instrument of expression; in fact it does but modify a little the principles of all effective expression at all times. 'Tis art's function to conceal itself: *ars est celare artem*.—is a saying, which, exaggerated by inexact quotation, has perhaps been oftenest and most confidently quoted by those who have had little literary or other art to conceal; and from the very beginning of professional literature, the "labour of the file"—a labour in the case of Plato, for instance, or Virgil, like that of the oldest of goldsmiths as described by Apuleius, enriching the work by far more than the weight of precious metal it removed—has always had its function. Sometimes, doubtless, as in later examples of it, this Roman Euphuism, determined at any cost to attain beauty in writing—*ἐς κάλλος γράφειν*

might lapse into its characteristics fopperies or mannerisms, into the "defects of its qualities", in truth, not wholly unpleasing perhaps, or at least excusable, when looked at as but the toys (so Cicero calls them) the strictly congenial and appropriate toys, of an assiduously cultivated age, which could not help being polite, critical, self-conscious. The mere love of novelty also had, of course, its part there: as with the Euphuism of the Elizabethan age, and of the modern French romanticists, its *neologies* were the ground of one of the favourite charges against it; though indeed, as regards these tricks of taste also, there is nothing new, but a quaint family likeness rather, between the Euphuists of successive ages. Here, as elsewhere, the power of "fashion", as it is called, is but one minor form, slight enough, it may be, yet distinctly symptomatic, of that deeper yearning of human nature towards ideal perfection, which is a continuous force in it; and since in this direction too human nature is limited, such fashions must necessarily reproduce themselves. Among other resemblances to later growths of Euphuism, its archaisms on the one hand, and its neologies on the other, the Euphuism of the days of Marcus Aurelius had, in the composition of verse, its fancy for the *refrain*. It was a snatch from a popular chorus, something he had heard sounding all over the town of Pisa one April night, one of the first bland and summer-like nights of the year, that Flavian had chosen for the refrain of a poem he was then pondering—the *Pervigilium Veneris*—the vigil, or "nocturn", of Venus.

Certain elderly counsellors, filling what may be thought a constant part in the little tragi-comedy which literature and its votaries are playing in all ages, would ask, suspecting some affectation or unreality in that minute culture of *form*:—Cannot those who have a thing to say, say it directly? Why not be simple and broad, like the old writers of Greece? And this challenge had at least the effect of setting his thoughts at work on the intellectual situation as it lay between the children of the present and those earliest masters. Certainly, the most wonderful, the unique, point, about the Greek genius, in literature as in everything else, was the entire absence of imitation in its productions. How had the burden of precedent, laid upon every artist, increased since then! It was all around one:—that smoothly built world of old classical taste, an accomplished fact, with overwhelming authority on every detail of the conduct of one's work. With no fardel on its own back, yet so imperious towards those who came labouring after it, *Hellas*, in its early freshness, looked as distant from him even then as it does from ourselves. There might seem to be no place left for novelty or originality,—place only for a patient, an infinite, faultlessness. On this question too Flavian passed through a

world of curious art-casuistries, of self-tormenting, at the threshold of his work. Was poetic beauty a thing ever one and the same, a type absolute; or, changing always with the soul of time itself, did it depend upon the taste, the peculiar trick of apprehension, the fashion, as we say, of each successive age? Might one recover that old, earlier sense of it, that earlier manner, in a masterly effort to recall all the complexities of the life, moral and intellectual, of the earlier age to which it had belonged? Had there been really bad ages in art or literature? Were all ages, even those earliest, adventurous, matutinal days, in themselves equally poetical or unpoetical; and poetry, the literary beauty, the poetic ideal, always but a borrowed light upon men's actual life?

Homer had said—

Οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ λιμένος πολυβενθέος ἐντὸς ἱκοντο,
 Ἰστία μὲν στείλαντο, θέσαν δ' ἐν νηϊ μελαίνῃ . . .
 Ἐκ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βαΐνον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης.

And how poetic the simple incident seemed, told just thus! Homer was always telling things after this manner. And one might think there had been no effort in it: that here was but the almost mechanical transcript of a time, naturally, intrinsically, poetic, a time in which one could hardly have spoken at all without ideal effect, or the sailors pulled down their boat without making a picture in "the great style", against a sky charged with marvels. Must not the mere prose of an age, itself thus ideal, have counted for more than half of Homer's poetry? Or might the closer student discover even here, even in Homer, the really mediatorial function of the poet, as between the reader and the actual matter of his experience; the poet waiting, so to speak, in an age which had felt itself trite and commonplace enough, on his opportunity for the touch of "golden alchemy", or at least for the pleasantly lighted side of things themselves? Might not another, in one's own prosaic and used-up time, so uneventful as it had been through the long reign of these quiet Antonines, in like manner, discover his ideal, by a due waiting upon it? Would not a future generation, looking back upon this, under the power of the enchanted-distance fallacy, find it ideal to view, in contrast with its own languor—the languor that for some reason (concerning which Augustine will one day have his view) seemed to haunt men always? Had Homer, even, appeared unreal and affected in his poetic flight, to some of the people of his own age, as seemed to happen with every new literature in turn? In any case, the intellectual conditions of early Greece had been—how different from these! And a true literary tact would accept

hat difference in forming the primary conception of the literary function at a later time. Perhaps the utmost one could get by conscious effort, in the way of a reaction or return to the conditions of an earlier and fresher age, would be but *novitas*, artificial artlessness, *naïveté*; and his quality too might have its measure of euphuistic charm, direct and sensible enough, though it must count, in comparison with that genuine early Greek newness at the beginning, not as the freshness of the open fields, but only of a bunch of field-flowers in a heated room.

There was, meantime, all this:—on one side, the old pagan culture, or us but a fragment, for him an accomplished yet present fact, still living, united, organic whole, in the entirety of its art, its thought, its religions, its sagacious forms of polity, that so weighty authority exercised on every point, being in reality only the measure of its harm for every one: on the other side, the actual world in all its eager self-assertion, with Flavian himself, in his boundless animation, here, at the centre of the situation. From the natural defects, from the setting, of his euphuism, his assiduous cultivation of manner, he was saved by the consciousness that he had a matter to present, very real, at least to him. That preoccupation of the *dilettante* with what might seem mere details of form, after all, did but serve the purpose of bringing to the surface, sincerely and in their integrity, certain strong personal intuitions, a certain vision or apprehension of things as really being, with important results, thus, rather than thus,—intuitions which the artistic or literary faculty was called upon to follow, with the exactness of wax or clay, clothing the model within. Flavian too, with his fine clear mastery of the practically effective, had early laid hold of the principle, as axiomatic in literature: that to know when one's self is interested, is the first condition of interesting other people. It was a principle, the forcible apprehension of which made him jealous and fastidious in the selection of his intellectual food; often listless while others read or gazed diligently; never pretending to be moved out of mere complaisance to other people's emotions: it served to foster in him a very scrupulous literary sincerity with himself. And it was this uncompromising demand for a matter, in all art, derived immediately from lively personal intuition, this constant appeal to individual judgment, which saved his euphuism, even at its weakest, from lapsing into mere artifice.

Was the magnificent *exordium* of Lucretius, addressed to the goddess Venus, the work of his earlier manhood, and designed originally to open an argument less persistently sombre than that protest against the whole pagan heaven which actually follows it? It is certainly the most typical expression of a mood, still incident to the young poet,

as a thing peculiar to his youth, when he feels the sentimental current setting forcibly along his veins, and so much as a matter of purely physical excitement, that he can hardly distinguish it from the animation of external nature, the upswelling of the seed in the earth, and of the sap through the trees. Flavian, to whom, again, as to his later euphuistic kinsmen, old mythology seemed as full of untried, unexpressed motives and interest as human life itself, had long been occupied with a kind of mystic hymn to the vernal principle of life in things; a composition shaping itself, little by little, out of a thousand dim perceptions, into singularly definite form (definite and firm as fine-art in metal, thought Marius) for which, as I said, he had caught his "refrain", from the lips of the young men, singing because they could not help it, in the streets of Pisa. And as oftenest happens also, with natures of genuinely poetic quality, those piecemeal beginnings came suddenly to harmonious completeness among the fortunate incidents, the physical heat and light, of one singularly happy day.

It was one of the first hot days of March—"the sacred day"—on which, from Pisa, as from many another harbour on the Mediterranean, the *Ship of Isis* went to sea, and every one walked down to the shore-side to witness the freighting of the vessel, its launching and final abandonment among the waves, as an object really devoted to the Great Goddess, that new rival, "or double", of ancient Venus, and like her a favourite patroness of sailors. On the evening next before, all the world had been abroad to view the illumination of the river; the stately lines of building being wreathed with hundreds of many-coloured lamps. The young men had poured forth their chorus—

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit,
Quique amavit cras amet—

as they bore their torches through the yielding crowd, or rowed their lanterned boats up and down the stream, till far into the night, when heavy rain-drops had driven the last lingerers home. Morning broke, however, smiling and serene; and the long procession started betimes. The river, curving slightly, with the smoothly paved streets on either side, between its low marble parapet and the fair dwelling-houses, formed the main highway of the city; and the pageant, accompanied throughout by innumerable lanterns and wax tapers, took its course up one of these streets, crossing the water by a bridge up-stream, and down the other, to the haven, every possible standing-place, out of doors and within, being crowded with sight-seers, of whom Marius was one of the most eager, deeply interested in finding the spectacle much as Apuleius had described it in his famous book.

At the head of the procession, the master of ceremonies, quietly waving back the assistants, made way for a number of women, scattering perfumes. They were succeeded by a company of musicians, piping and twanging, on instruments the strangest Marius had ever beheld, the notes of a hymn, narrating the first origin of this votive rite to a choir of youths, who marched behind them singing it. The tire-women and other personal attendants of the great goddess came next, bearing the instruments of their ministry, and various articles from the sacred wardrobe, wrought of the most precious material; some of them with long ivory combs, plying their hands in wild yet graceful concert of movement as they went, in devout mimicry of the toilet. Placed in their rear were the mirror-bearers of the goddess, carrying large mirrors of beaten brass or silver, turned in such a way as to reflect to the great body of worshippers who followed, the face of the mysterious image, as it moved on its way, and their faces to it, as though they were in fact advancing to meet the heavenly visitor. They comprehended a multitude of both sexes and of all ages, already initiated into the divine secret, clad in fair linen, the females veiled, the males with shining tonsures, and every one carrying a *sistrum*—the richer sort of silver, a few very dainty persons of fine gold—rattling the reeds, with a noise like the jargon of innumerable birds and insects awakened from torpor and abroad in the spring sun. Then, borne upon a kind of platform, came the goddess herself, undulating above the heads of the multitude as the bearers walked, in mystic robe embroidered with the moon and stars, bordered gracefully with a fringe of real fruit and flowers, and with a glittering crown upon the head. The train of the procession consisted of the priests in long white vestments, close from head to foot, distributed into various groups, each bearing, exposed aloft, one of the sacred symbols of Isis—the corn-fan, the golden asp, the ivory hand of equity, and among them the votive ship itself, carved and gilt, and adorned bravely with flags flying. Last of all walked the high priest; the people kneeling as he passed to kiss his hand, in which were those well-remembered roses.

Marius followed with the rest to the harbour, where the mystic ship, lowered from the shoulders of the priests, was loaded with as much as it could carry of the rich spices and other costly gifts, offered in great profusion by the worshippers, and thus, launched at last upon the water, left the shore, crossing the harbour-bar in the wake of a much stouter vessel than itself with a crew of white-robed mariners, whose function it was, at the appointed moment, finally to desert it on the open sea.

The remainder of the day was spent by most in parties on the water.

Flavian lay there, with the enemy at his breast now in a painful cough, but relieved from that burning fever in the head, amid the rich-scented flowers—rare Pæstum roses, and the like—procured by Marius in his solace, in a fancied convalescence; and would, at intervals, return to labour at his verses, with a great eagerness to complete and transcribe the work, while Marius sat and wrote at his dictation, one of the latest but not the poorest specimens of genuine Latin poetry.

It was in fact a kind of nuptial hymn, which, taking its start from the thought of nature as the universal mother, celebrated the preliminary pairing and mating together of all fresh things, in the hot and genial springtime—the immemorial nuptials of the soul of spring itself and the brown earth; and was full of a delighted, mystic sense of what passed between them in that fantastic marriage. That mystic burden was relieved, at intervals, by the familiar playfulness of the Latin verse-writer in dealing with mythology, which, though coming at so late a day, had still a wonderful freshness in its old age.—“*Amor* has put his weapons by and will keep holiday. He was bidden go without apparel, that none might be wounded by his bow and arrows. But take care! In truth he is none the less armed than usual, though he be all unclad.”

In the expression of all this Flavian seemed, while making it his chief aim to retain the opulent, many-syllabled vocabulary of the Latin genius, at some points even to have advanced beyond it, in anticipation of wholly new laws of taste as regards sound, a new range of sound itself. The peculiar resultant note, associating itself with certain other experiences of his, was to Marius like the foretaste of an entirely novel world of poetic beauty to come. Flavian had caught, indeed, something of the rhyming cadence, the sonorous organ-music of the medieval Latin, and therewithal something of its unction and mysticity of spirit. There was in his work, along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn. The impression thus forced upon Marius connected itself with a feeling, the exact inverse of that, known to every one, which seems to say, *You have been just here, just thus, before!*—a feeling, in his case, not reminiscent but prescient of the future, which passed over him afterwards many times, as he came across certain places and people. It was as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed-of and renewed condition of human body and soul: as if he saw the heavy yet decrepit old Roman architecture about him, rebuilding on an intrinsically better pattern.—Could it have been actually on a new musical instrument that Flavian had first heard the novel accents of his verse? And still Marius noticed there, amid all its

richness of expression and imagery, that firmness of outline he had always relished so much in the composition of Flavian. Yes! a firmness like that of some master of noble metal-work, manipulating tenacious bronze or gold. Even now that haunting refrain, with its *impromptu* variations, from the throats of those strong young men, came floating through the window.

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit,
Quique amavit cras amet!

—repeated Flavian, tremulously, dictating yet one stanza more.

What he was losing, his freehold of a soul and body so fortunately endowed, the mere liberty of life above-ground, "those sunny mornings in the cornfields by the sea", as he recollected them one day, when the window was thrown open upon the early freshness—his sense of all this, was from the first singularly near and distinct, yet rather as of something he was but debarred the use of for a time than finally bidding farewell to. That was while he was still with no very grave misgivings as to the issue of his sickness, and felt the sources of life still springing essentially unadulterate within him. From time to time, indeed, Marius, labouring eagerly at the poem from his dictation, was haunted by a feeling of the triviality of such work just then. The recurrent sense of some obscure danger beyond the mere danger of death, vaguer than that and by so much the more terrible, like the menace of some shadowy adversary in the dark with whose mode of attack they had no acquaintance, disturbed him now and again through those hours of excited attention to his manuscript, and to the purely physical wants of Flavian. Still, during these three days there was much hope and cheerfulness, and even jesting. Half-consciously Marius tried to prolong one or another relieving circumstance of the day, the preparations for rest and morning refreshment, for instance; sadly making the most of the little luxury of this or that, with something of the feigned cheer of the mother who sets her last morsels before her famished child as for a feast, but really that he "may eat it and die."

On the afternoon of the seventh day he allowed Marius finally to put aside the unfinished manuscript. For the enemy, leaving the chest quiet at length though much exhausted, had made itself felt with full power again in a painful vomiting, which seemed to shake his body asunder, with great consequent prostration. From that time the distress increased rapidly downwards. *Omnia tum vero vitæ claustra lababant*; and soon the cold was mounting with sure pace from the dead feet to the head.

And now Marius began more than to suspect what the issue must be, and henceforward could but watch with a sort of agonised fascination the rapid but systematic work of the destroyer, faintly relieving a little the mere accidents of the sharper forms of suffering. Flavian himself appeared, in full consciousness at last—in clear-sighted, deliberate estimate of the actual crisis—to be doing battle with his adversary. His mind surveyed, with great distinctness, the various suggested modes of relief. He must without fail get better, he would fancy, might he be removed to a certain place on the hills where as a child he had once recovered from sickness, but found that he could scarcely raise his head from the pillow without giddiness. As if now surely foreseeing the end, he would set himself, with an eager effort, and with that eager and angry look, which is noted as one of the premonitions of death in this disease, to fashion out, without formal dictation, still a few more broken verses of his unfinished work, in hard-set determination, defiant of pain, to arrest this or that little drop at least from the river of sensuous imagery rushing so quickly past him.

But at length *delirium*—symptom that the work of the plague was done, and the last resort of life yielding to the enemy—broke the coherent order of words and thoughts; and Marius, intent on the coming agony, found his best hope in the increasing dimness of the patient's mind. In intervals of clearer consciousness the visible signs of cold, of sorrow and desolation, were very painful. No longer battling with the disease, he seemed as it were to place himself at the disposal of the victorious foe, dying passively, like some dumb creature, in hopeless acquiescence at last. That old, half-pleading petulance, unamiable, yet, as it might seem, only needing conditions of life a little happier than they had actually been, to become refinement of affection, a delicate grace in its demand on the sympathy of others, had changed in those moments of full intelligence to a clinging and tremulous gentleness, as he lay—"on the very threshold of death"—with a sharply contracted hand in the hand of Marius, to his almost surprised joy, winning him now to an absolutely self-forgetful devotion. There was a new sort of pleading in the misty eyes, just because they took such unsteady note of him, which made Marius feel as if *guilty*; anticipating thus a form of self-reproach with which even the tenderest ministrant may be sometimes surprised, when, at death, affectionate labour suddenly ceasing leaves room for the suspicion of some failure of love perhaps, at one or another minute point in it. Marius almost longed to take his share in the suffering, that he might understand so the better how to relieve it.

It seemed that the light of the lamp distressed the patient, and Marius extinguished it. The thunder which had sounded all day among the hills, with a heat not unwelcome to Flavian, had given way at nightfall

to steady rain; and in the darkness Marius lay down beside him, faintly shivering now in the sudden cold, to lend him his own warmth, undeterred by the fear of contagion which had kept other people from passing near the house. At length about daybreak he perceived that the last effort had come with a revival of mental clearness, as Marius understood by the contact, light as it was, in recognition of him there. "Is it a comfort," he whispered then, "that I shall often come and weep over you?"—"Not unless I be aware, and hear you weeping!"

The sun shone out on the people going to work for a long hot day, and Marius was standing by the dead, watching, with deliberate purpose to fix in his memory every detail, that he might have this picture in reserve, should any hour of forgetfulness hereafter come to him with the temptation to feel completely happy again. A feeling of outrage, of resentment against nature itself, mingled with an agony of pity, as he noted on the now placid features a certain look of humility, almost abject, like the expression of a smitten child or animal, as of one, fallen at last, after bewildering struggle, wholly under the power of a merciless adversary. From mere tenderness of soul he would not forget one circumstance in all that; as a man might piously stamp on his memory the death-scene of a brother wrongfully condemned to die, against a time that may come.

The fear of the corpse, which surprised him in his effort to watch by it through the darkness, was a hint of his own failing strength, just in time. The first night after the washing of the body, he bore stoutly enough the tax which affection seemed to demand, throwing the incense from time to time on the little altar placed beside the bier. It was the recurrence of the thing—that unchanged outline below the coverlet, amid a silence in which the faintest rustle seemed to speak—that finally overcame his determination. Surely, here, in this alienation, this sense of distance between them, which had come over him before though in minor degree when the mind of Flavian had wandered in his sickness, was another of the pains of death. Yet he was able to make all due preparations, and go through the ceremonies, shortened a little because of the infection, when, on a cloudless evening, the funeral procession went forth; himself, the flames of the pyre having done their work, carrying away the urn of the deceased, in the folds of his toga, to its last resting-place in the cemetery beside the highway, and so turning home to sleep in his own desolate lodging.

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus
Tam cari capitis?—

What thought of others' thoughts about one could there be with the regret for "so dear a head" fresh at one's heart?

PART THE SECOND

CHAPTER VIII

ANIMULA VAGULA

Animula, vagula, blandula
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?
Pallidula, rigida, nudula.

The Emperor Hadrian to his Soul.

FLAVIAN was no more. The little marble chest with its dust and tears lay cold among the faded flowers. For most people the actual spectacle of death brings out into greater reality, at least for the imagination, whatever confidence they may entertain of the soul's survival in another life. To Marius, greatly agitated by that event, the earthly end of Flavian came like a final revelation of nothing less than the soul's extinction. Flavian had gone out as utterly as the fire among those still beloved ashes. Even that wistful suspense of judgment expressed by the dying Hadrian, regarding further stages of being still possible for the soul in some dim journey hence, seemed wholly untenable, and, with it, almost all that remained of the religion of his childhood. Future extinction seemed just then to be what the unforced witness of his own nature pointed to. On the other hand, there came a novel curiosity as to what the various schools of ancient philosophy had had to say concerning that strange, fluttering creature; and that curiosity impelled him to certain severe studies, in which his earlier religious conscience seemed still to survive, as a principle of hieratic scrupulousness or integrity of thought, regarding this new service to intellectual light.

At this time, by his poetic and inward temper, he might have fallen a prey to the enervating mysticism, then in wait for ardent souls in many a melodramatic revival of old religion or theosophy. From all this, fascinating as it might actually be to one side of his character, he was kept by a genuine virility there, effective in him, among other results, as a hatred of what was theatrical, and the instinctive recognition that in vigorous intelligence, after all, divinity was most likely to be found a resident. With this was connected the feeling, increasing with his advance to manhood, of a poetic beauty in mere clearness of thought, the actually æsthetic charm of a cold austerity of mind; as if the kinship of that to the clearness of physical light were something

more than a figure of speech. Of all those various religious fantasies, as so many forms of enthusiasm, he could well appreciate the picturesque: that was made easy by his natural Epicureanism, already prompting him to conceive of himself as but the passive spectator of the world around him. But it was to the severer reasoning, of which such matters as Epicurean theory are born, that, in effect, he now betook himself. Instinctively suspicious of those mechanical *arcana*, those pretended "secrets unveiled" of the professional mystic, which really bring great and little souls to one level, for Marius the only possible dilemma lay between that old, ancestral Roman religion, now become so incredible to him, and the honest action of his own untroubled, unassisted intelligence. Even the *Arcana Celestia* of Platonism—what the sons of Plato had had to say regarding the essential indifference of pure soul to its bodily house and merely occasional dwelling-place—seemed to him, while his heart was there in the urn with the material ashes of Flavian, or still lingering in memory over his last agony, wholly inhuman or morose, as tending to alleviate his resentment at nature's wrong. It was to the sentiment of the body, and the affections it defined—the flesh, of whose force and colour that wandering Platonic soul was but so frail a residue or abstract—he must cling. The various pathetic traits of the beloved, suffering, perished body of Flavian, so deeply pondered, had made him a materialist, but with something of the temper of a devotee.

As a consequence it might have seemed at first that his care for poetry had passed away, to be replaced by the literature of thought. His much-pondered manuscript verses were laid aside; and what happened now to one, who was certainly to be something of a poet from first to last, looked at the moment like a change from poetry to prose. He came of age about this time, his own master though with beardless face; and at eighteen, an age at which, then as now, many youths of capacity, who fancied themselves poets, secluded themselves from others chiefly in affectation and vague dreaming, he secluded himself indeed from others, but in a severe intellectual meditation, that salt of poetry, without which all the more serious charm is lacking to the imaginative world. Still with something of the old religious earnestness of his childhood, he set himself—*Sich im Denken zu orientiren*—to determine his bearings, as by compass, in the world of thought—to get that precise acquaintance with the creative intelligence itself, its structure and capacities, its relation to other parts of himself and to other things, without which, certainly, no poetry can be masterly. Like a young man rich in this world's goods coming of age, he must go into affairs, and ascertain his outlook. There must be no disguises. An exact estimate of realities, as towards himself, he must

have—a delicately measured gradation of certainty in things—from the distant, haunted horizon of mere surmise or imagination, to the actual feeling of sorrow in his heart, as he reclined one morning, alone instead of in pleasant company, to ponder the hard sayings of an imperfect old Greek manuscript, unrolled beside him. His former gay companions, meeting him in the streets of the old Italian town, and noting the graver lines coming into the face of the sombre but enthusiastic student of intellectual structure, who could hold his own so well in the society of accomplished older men, were half afraid of him, though proud to have him of their company. Why this reserve?—they asked, concerning the orderly, self-possessed youth, whose speech and carriage seemed so carefully measured, who was surely no poet like the rapt, dishevelled Lupus. Was he secretly in love, perhaps, whose toga was so daintily folded, and who was always as fresh as the flowers he wore; or bent on his own line of ambition; or even on riches?

Marius, meantime, was reading freely, in early morning for the most part, those writers chiefly who had made it their business to know what might be thought concerning that strange, enigmatic, personal essence, which had seemed to go out altogether, along with the funeral fires. And the old Greek who more than any other was now giving form to his thoughts was a very hard master. From Epicurus, from the thunder and lightning of Lucretius—like thunder and lightning some distance off, one might recline to enjoy, in a garden of roses—he had gone back to the writer who was in a certain sense the teacher of both, Heraclitus of Ionia. His difficult book “Concerning Nature” was even then rare, for people had long since satisfied themselves by the quotation of certain brilliant, isolated, oracles only, out of what was at best a taxing kind of lore. But the difficulty of the early Greek prose did but spur the curiosity of Marius; the writer, the superior clearness of whose intellectual view had so sequestered him from other men, who had had so little joy of that superiority, being avowedly exacting as to the amount of devout attention he required from the student. “The many,” he said, always thus emphasising the difference between the many and the few, are “like people heavy with wine”, “led by children”, “knowing not whither they go”; and yet, “much learning doth not make wise”; and again, “the ass, after all, would have his thistles rather than fine gold”.

Heraclitus, indeed, had not under-rated the difficulty for “the many” of the paradox with which his doctrine begins, and the due reception of which must involve a denial of habitual impressions, as the necessary first step in the way of truth. His philosophy had been developed in conscious, outspoken opposition to the current mode of thought, as a

matter requiring some exceptional loyalty to pure reason and its "dry light". Men are subject to an illusion, he protests, regarding matters apparent to sense. What the uncorrected sense gives was a false impression of permanence or fixity in things, which have really changed their nature in the very moment in which we see and touch them. And the radical flaw in the current mode of thinking would lie herein: that, reflecting this false or uncorrected sensation, it attributes to the phenomena of experience a durability which does not really belong to them. Imaging forth from those fluid impressions a world of firmly outlined objects, it leads one to regard as a thing stark and dead what is in reality full of animation, of vigour, of the fire of life—that eternal process of nature, of which at a later time Goethe spoke as the "Living Garment", whereby God is seen of us, ever in weaving at the "Loom of Time".

And the appeal which the old Greek thinker made was, in the first instance, from confused to unconfused sensation; with a sort of prophetic seriousness, a great claim and assumption, such as we may understand, if we anticipate in this preliminary scepticism the ulterior scope of his speculation, according to which the universal movement of all natural things is but one particular stage, or measure, of that ceaseless activity wherein the divine reason consists. The one true being—that constant subject of all early thought—it was his merit to have conceived, not as sterile and stagnant inaction, but as a perpetual energy, from the restless stream of which, at certain points, some elements detach themselves, and harden into non-entity and death, corresponding, as outward objects, to man's inward condition of ignorance: that is, to the slowness of his faculties. It is with this paradox of a subtle, perpetual change in all visible things, that the high speculation of Heraclitus begins. Hence the scorn he expresses for anything like a careless, half-conscious, "use-and-wont" reception of our experience, which took so strong a hold on men's memories! Hence those many precepts towards a strenuous self-consciousness in all we think and do, that loyalty to cool and candid reason, which makes strict attentiveness of mind a kind of religious duty and service.

The negative doctrine, then, that the objects of our ordinary experience, fixed as they seem, are really in perpetual change, had been, as originally conceived, but the preliminary step towards a large positive system of almost religious philosophy. Then as now, the illuminated philosophic mind might apprehend, in what seemed a mass of lifeless matter, the movement of that universal life, in which things, and men's impressions of them, were ever "coming to be", alternately consumed and renewed. That continual change, to be discovered by the attentive understanding where common opinion

found fixed objects, was but the indicator of a subtler but all-pervading motion—the sleepless, ever-sustained, inexhaustible energy of the divine reason itself, proceeding always by its own rhythmical logic, and lending to all mind and matter, in turn, what life they had. In this “perpetual flux” of things and of souls, there was, as Heraclitus conceived, a continuance, if not of their material or spiritual elements, yet of orderly intelligible relationships, like the harmony of musical notes, wrought out in and through the series of their mutations—ordinances of the divine reason, maintained throughout the changes of the phenomenal world; and this harmony in their mutation and opposition, was, after all, a principle of sanity, of reality, there. But it happened, that, of all this, the first, merely sceptical or negative step, that easiest step on the threshold, had alone remained in general memory; and the “doctrine of motion” seemed to those who had felt its seduction to make all fixed knowledge impossible. The swift passage of things, the still swifter passage of those modes of our conscious being which seemed to reflect them, might indeed be the burning of the divine fire: but what was ascertained was that they did pass away like a devouring flame, or like the race of water in the mid-stream—too swiftly for any real knowledge of them to be attainable. Heracliteanism had grown to be almost identical with the famous doctrine of the sophist Protagoras, that the momentary, sensible apprehension of the individual was the only standard of what is or is not, and each one the measure of all things to himself. The impressive name of Heraclitus had become but an authority for a philosophy of the despair of knowledge.

And as it had been with his original followers in Greece, so it happened now with the later Roman disciple. He, too, paused at the apprehension of that constant motion of things—the drift of flowers, of little or great souls, of ambitious systems, in the stream around him, the first source, the ultimate issue, of which, in regions out of sight, must count with him as but a dim problem. The bold mental flight of the old Greek master from the fleeting, competing objects of experience to that one universal life, in which the whole sphere of physical change might be reckoned as but a single pulsation, remained by him as hypothesis only—the hypothesis he actually preferred, as in itself most credible, however scantily realisable even by the imagination—yet still as but one unverified hypothesis, among many others, concerning the first principle of things. He might reserve it as a fine, high, visionary consideration, very remote upon the intellectual ladder, just at the point, indeed, where that ladder seemed to pass into the clouds, but for which there was certainly no time left just now by his eager interest in the real objects so close to

him, on the lowlier earthy steps nearest the ground. And those childish days of reverie, when he played at priests, played in many another day-dream, working his way from the actual present, as far as he might, with a delightful sense of escape in replacing the outer world of other people by an inward world as himself really cared to have it, had made him a kind of "idealist". He was become aware of the possibility of a large dissidence between an inward and somewhat exclusive world of vivid personal apprehension, and the unimproved, unheightened reality of the life of those about him. As a consequence, he was ready now to concede, somewhat more easily than others, the first point of his new lesson, that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions. To move afterwards in that outer world of other people, as though taking it at their estimate, would be possible henceforth only as a kind of irony. And as with the *Vicaire Savoyard*, after reflecting on the variations of philosophy, "the first fruit he drew from that reflection was the lesson of a limitation of his researches to what immediately interested him; to rest peacefully in a profound ignorance as to all beside; to disquiet himself only concerning those things which it was of import for him to know." At least he would entertain no theory of conduct which did not allow its due weight to this primary element of incertitude or negation, in the conditions of man's life.

Just here he joined company, retracing in his individual mental pilgrimage the historic order of human thought, with another wayfarer on the journey, another ancient Greek master, the founder of the Cyrenaic philosophy, whose weighty traditional utterances (for he had left no writing) served in turn to give effective outline to the contemplations of Marius. There was something in the doctrine itself congruous with the place wherein it had its birth; and for a time Marius lived much, mentally, in the brilliant Greek colony which had given a dubious name to the philosophy of pleasure. It hung, for his fancy, between the mountains and the sea, among richer than Italian gardens, on a certain breezy table-land projecting from the African coast, some hundreds of miles southward from Greece. There, in a delightful climate, with something of trans-alpine temperance amid its luxury, and withal in an inward atmosphere of temperance which did but further enhance the brilliancy of human life, the school of Cyrene had maintained itself as almost one with the family of its founder; certainly as nothing coarse or unclean, and under the influence of accomplished women.

Aristippus of Cyrene too had left off in suspense of judgment as to what might really lie behind—*flammanitia mania mundi*: the flaming

ramparts of the world. Those strange, bold, sceptical surmises, which had haunted the minds of the first Greek enquirers as merely abstract doubt, which had been present to the mind of Heraclitus as one element only in a system of abstract philosophy, became with Aristippus a very subtly practical worldly-wisdom. The difference between him and those obscure earlier thinkers is almost like that between an ancient thinker generally, and a modern man of the world: it was the difference between the mystic in his cell, or the prophet in the desert, and the expert, cosmopolitan, administrator of his dark sayings, translating the abstract thoughts of the master into terms, first of all, of *sentiment*. It has been sometimes seen, in the history of the human mind, that when thus translated into terms of sentiment—of sentiment, as lying already half-way towards practice—the abstract ideas of metaphysics for the first time reveal their true significance. The metaphysical principle, in itself, as it were, without hands or feet, becomes impressive, fascinating, of effect, when translated into a precept as to how it were best to feel and act; in other words, under its sentimental or ethical equivalent. The leading idea of the great master of Cyrene, his theory that things are but shadows, and that we, even as they, never continue in one stay, might indeed have taken effect as a languid, enervating, consumptive nihilism, as a precept of “renunciation”, which would touch and handle and busy itself with nothing. But in the reception of metaphysical *formulae*, all depends, as regards their actual and ulterior result, on the pre-existent qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall—the company they find already present there, on their admission into the house of thought; there being at least so much truth as this involves in the theological maxim, that the reception of this or that speculative conclusion is really a matter of will. The persuasion that all is vanity, with this happily constituted Greek, who had been a genuine disciple of Socrates and reflected, presumably, something of his blitheness in the face of the world, his happy way of taking all chances, generated neither frivolity nor sourness, but induced, rather, an impression, just serious enough, of the call upon men’s attention of the crisis in which they find themselves. It became the stimulus towards every kind of activity, and prompted a perpetual, inextinguishable thirst after experience.

With Marius, then, the influence of the philosopher of pleasure depended on this, that in him an abstract doctrine, originally somewhat acrid, had fallen upon a rich and genial nature, well fitted to transform it into a theory of practice, of considerable stimulative power towards a fair life. What Marius saw in him was the spectacle of one of the happiest temperaments coming, so to speak, to an understanding with the most depressing of theories; accepting the results of a metaphysical

system which seemed to concentrate into itself all the weakening trains of thought in earlier Greek speculation, and making the best of it; turning its hard, bare truths, with wonderful tact, into precepts of grace, and delicate wisdom, and a delicate sense of honour. Given the hardest terms, supposing our days are indeed but a shadow, even so, we may well adorn and beautify, in scrupulous self-respect, our souls, and whatever our souls touch upon—these wonderful bodies, these material dwelling-places through which the shadows pass together for awhile, the very raiment we wear, our very pastimes and the intercourse of society. The most discerning judges saw in him something like the graceful “humanities” of the later Roman, and our modern “culture”, as it is termed; while Horace recalled his sayings as expressing best his own consummate amenity in the reception of life.

In this way, for Marius, under the guidance of that old master of decorous living, those eternal doubts as to the *criteria* of truth reduced themselves to a scepticism almost drily practical, a scepticism which developed the opposition between things as they are and our impressions and thoughts concerning them—the possibility, if an outward world does really exist, of some faultiness in our apprehension of it—the doctrine, in short, of what is termed “the subjectivity of knowledge”. That is a consideration, indeed, which lies as an element of weakness, like some admitted fault or flaw, at the very foundation of every philosophical account of the universe; which confronts all philosophies at their starting, but with which none have really dealt conclusively, some perhaps not quite sincerely; which those who are not philosophers dissipate by “common”, but unphilosophical, sense, or by religious faith. The peculiar strength of Marius was, to have apprehended this weakness on the threshold of human knowledge, in the whole range of its consequences. Our knowledge is limited to what we feel, he reflected: we need no proof that we feel. But can we be sure that things are at all like our feelings? Mere peculiarities in the instruments of our cognition, like the little knots and waves on the surface of a mirror, may distort the matter they seem but to represent. Of other people we cannot truly know even the feelings, nor how far they would indicate the same modifications, each one of a personality really unique, in using the same terms as ourselves; that “common experience”, which is sometimes proposed as a satisfactory basis of certainty, being after all only a fixity of language. But our own impressions!—The light and heat of that blue veil over our heads, the heavens spread out, perhaps *not* like a curtain over anything!—How reassuring, after so long a debate about the rival *criteria* of truth, to fall back upon direct sensation, to limit one’s aspirations after knowledge to that! In an age still materially so brilliant, so expert in the

artistic handling of material things, with sensible capacities still in undiminished vigour, with the whole world of classic art and poetry outspread before it, and where there was more than eye or ear could well take in—how natural the determination to rely exclusively upon the phenomena of the senses, which certainly never deceive us about themselves, about which alone we can never deceive ourselves!

And so the abstract apprehension that the little point of this present moment alone really is, between a past which has just ceased to be and a future which may never come, became practical with Marius, under the form of a resolve, as far as possible, to exclude regret and desire, and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind. *America is here and now—here, or nowhere:* as Wilhelm Meister finds out one day, just not too late, after so long looking vaguely across the ocean for the opportunity of the development of his capacities. It was as if, recognising in perpetual motion the law of nature, Marius identified his own way of life cordially with it, “throwing himself into the stream”, so to speak. He too must maintain a harmony with that soul of motion in things, by constantly renewed mobility of character.

Omnis Aristippum decuit color et status et res.—

Thus Horace had summed up that perfect manner in the reception of life attained by his old Cyrenaic master; and the first practical consequence of the metaphysic which lay behind that perfect manner, had been a strict limitation, almost the renunciation, of metaphysical enquiry itself. Metaphysic—that art, as it has so often proved, in the words of Michelet, *de s'égarer avec méthode*, of bewildering oneself methodically:—one must spend little time upon that! In the school of Cyrene, great as was its mental incisiveness, logical and physical speculation, theoretic interests generally, had been valued only so far as they served to give a groundwork, an intellectual justification, to that exclusive concern with practical ethics which was a note of the Cyrenaic philosophy. How earnest and enthusiastic, how true to itself, under how many varieties of character, had been the effect of the Greeks after Theory—*Theôria*—that vision of a wholly reasonable world, which, according to the greatest of them, literally makes man like God: how loyally they had still persisted in the quest after that, in spite of how many disappointments! In the Gospel of Saint John, perhaps, some of them might have found the kind of vision they were seeking for; but not in “doubtful disputations” concerning “being” and “not-being”, knowledge and appearance. Men’s minds, even young men’s minds, at that late day, might well seem oppressed by

the weariness of systems which had so far outrun positive knowledge; and in the mind of Marius, as in that old school of Cyrene, this sense of *ennui*, combined with appetites so youthfully vigorous, brought about reaction, a sort of suicide (instances of the like have been seen since) by which a great metaphysical *acumen* was devoted to the function of proving metaphysical speculation impossible, or useless. Abstract theory was to be valued only just so far as it might serve to clear the tablet of the mind from suppositions no more than half realisable, or wholly visionary, leaving it in flawless evenness of surface to the impressions of an experience, concrete and direct.

To be absolutely virgin towards such experience, by ridding ourselves of such abstractions as are but the ghosts of bygone impressions—to be rid of the notions we have made for ourselves, and that so often only misrepresent the experience of which they profess to be the representation—*idola*, idols, false appearances, as Bacon calls them later—to neutralise the distorting influence of metaphysical system by an all-accomplished metaphysic skill: it is this bold, hard, sober recognition, under a very "dry light", of its own proper aim, in union with a habit of feeling which on the practical side may perhaps open a wide doorway to human weakness, that gives to the Cyrenaic doctrine, to reproductions of this doctrine in the time of Marius or in our own, their gravity and importance. It was a school to which the young man might come, eager for truth, expecting much from philosophy, in no ignoble curiosity, aspiring after nothing less than an "initiation". He would be sent back, sooner or later, to experience, to the world of concrete impressions, to things as they may be seen, heard, felt by him; but with a wonderful machinery of observation, and free from the tyranny of mere theories.

So, in intervals of repose, after the agitation which followed the death of Flavian, the thoughts of Marius ran, while he felt himself as if returned to the fine, clear, peaceful light of that pleasant school of healthfully sensuous wisdom, in the brilliant old Greek colony, on its fresh upland by the sea. Not pleasure, but a general completeness of life, was the practical ideal to which this anti-metaphysical metaphysic really pointed. And towards such a full or complete life, a life of various yet select sensation, the most direct and effective auxiliary must be, in a word, Insight. Liberty of soul, freedom from all partial and misrepresentative doctrine which does but relieve one element in our experience at the cost of another, freedom from all embarrassment alike of regret for the past and of calculation on the future: this would be but preliminary to the real business of education—insight, insight through culture, into all that the present moment holds in trust for us, as we stand so briefly in its presence. From that maxim of *Life as the*

end of life, followed, as a practical consequence, the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities, of testing and exercising one's self in them, till one's whole nature became one complex medium of reception, towards the vision—the "beatific vision", if we really cared to make it such—of our actual experience in the world. Not the conveyance of an abstract body of truths or principles, would be the aim of the right education of one's self, or of another, but the conveyance of an art—an art in some degree peculiar to each individual character; with the modifications, that is, due to its special constitution, and the peculiar circumstances of its growth, inasmuch as no one of us is "like another, all in all".

CHAPTER IX

NEW CYRENAICISM

SUCH were the practical conclusions drawn for himself by Marius, when somewhat later he had outgrown the mastery of others, from the principle that "all is vanity". If he could but count upon the present, if a life brief at best could not certainly be shown to conduct one anywhere beyond itself, if men's highest curiosity was indeed so persistently baffled—then, with the Cyrenaics of all ages, he would at least fill up the measure of that present with vivid sensations, and such intellectual apprehensions, as, in strength and directness and their immediately realised values at the bar of an actual experience, are most like sensations. So some have spoken in every age; for, like all theories which really express a strong natural tendency of the human mind or even one of its characteristic modes of weakness, this vein of reflection is a constant tradition in philosophy. Every age of European thought has had its Cyrenaics or Epicureans, under many disguises: even under the hood of the monk. But—*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!*—is a proposal, the real import of which differs immensely, according to the natural taste, and the acquired judgment, of the guests who sit at the table. It may express nothing better than the instinct of Dante's Ciaccio, the accomplished glutton, in the mud of the *Inferno*; or, since on no hypothesis does man "live by bread alone", may come to be identical with—"My meat is to do what is just and kind"; while the soul, which can make no sincere claim to have apprehended anything beyond the veil of immediate experience, yet never loses a sense of happiness in conforming to the highest moral ideal it can clearly define

for itself; and actually, though not with so faint hope, does the "Father's business".

In that age of Marcus Aurelius, so completely disabused of the metaphysical ambition to pass beyond "the flaming ramparts of the world", but, on the other hand, possessed of so vast an accumulation of intellectual treasure, with so wide a view before it over all varieties of what is powerful or attractive in man and his works, the thoughts of Marius did but follow the line taken by the majority of educated persons, though to a different issue. Pitched to a really high and serious key, the precept—*Be perfect in regard to what is here and now*: the precept of "culture", as it is called, or of a complete education—might at least save him from the vulgarity and heaviness of a generation, certainly of no general fineness of temper, though with a material well-being abundant enough. Conceded that what is secure in our existence is but the sharp apex of the present moment between two hypothetical eternities, and all that is real in our experience but a series of fleeting impressions:—so Marius continued the sceptical argument he had condensed, as the matter to hold by, from his various philosophical reading:—given, that we are never to get beyond the walls of this closely shut cell of one's own personality; that the ideas we are somehow impelled to form of an outer world, and of other minds akin to our own, are, it may be, but a day-dream, and the thought of any world beyond, a day-dream perhaps idler still: then, he, at least, in whom those fleeting impressions—faces, voices, material sunshine—were very real and imperious, might well set himself to the consideration, how such actual moments as they passed might be made to yield their utmost, by the most dexterous training of capacity. Amid abstract metaphysical doubts, as to what might lie one step only beyond that experience, reinforcing the deep original materialism or earthliness of human nature itself, bound so intimately to the sensuous world, let him at least make the most of what was "here and now". In the actual dimness of ways from means to ends—ends in themselves desirable, yet for the most part distant, and for him, certainly, below the visible horizon—he would at all events be sure that the means, to use the well-worn terminology, should have something of finality or perfection about them, and themselves partake, in a measure, of the more excellent nature of ends—that the means should justify the end.

With this view he would demand culture, *παιδεία*, as the Cyrenaics said, or, in other words, a wide, a complete, education—an education partly negative, as ascertaining the true limits of man's capacities, but for the most part positive, and directed especially to the expansion and refinement of the power of reception; of those powers, above all, which are immediately relative to fleeting phenomena, the powers of

emotion and sense. In such an education, an "æsthetic" education, as it might now be termed, and certainly occupied very largely with those aspects of things which affect us pleurably through sensation, art, of course, including all the finer sorts of literature, would have a great part to play. The study of music, in that wider Platonic sense, according to which, *music* comprehends all those matters over which the Muses of Greek mythology preside, would conduct one to an exquisite appreciation of all the finer traits of nature and of man. Nay! the products of the imagination must themselves be held to present the most perfect forms of life—spirit and matter alike under their purest and most perfect conditions—the most strictly appropriate objects of that impassioned contemplation, which, in the world of intellectual discipline, as in the highest forms of morality and religion, must be held to be the essential function of the "perfect". Such manner of life might come even to seem a kind of religion—an inward, visionary, mystic piety, or religion, by virtue of its effort to live days "lovely and pleasant" in themselves, here and now, and with an all-sufficiency or well-being in the immediate sense of the object contemplated, independently of any faith, or hope that might be entertained as to their ulterior tendency. In this way, the true æsthetic culture would be realisable as a new form of the contemplative life, founding its claim on the intrinsic "blessedness" of "vision"—the vision of perfect men and things. One's human nature, indeed, would fain reckon on an assured and endless future, pleasing itself with the dream of a final home, to be attained at some still remote date, yet with a conscious, delightful home-coming at last, as depicted in many an old poetic Elysium. On the other hand, the world of perfected sensation, intelligence, emotion, is so close to us, and so attractive, that the most visionary of spirits must needs represent the world unseen in colours, and under a form really borrowed from it. Let me be sure then—might he not plausibly say?—that I miss no detail of this life of realised consciousness in the present! Here at least is a vision, a theory, *θεωρία*, which reposes on no basis of unverified hypothesis, which makes no call upon a future after all somewhat problematic; as it would be unaffected by any discovery of an Empedocles (improving on the old story of Prometheus) as to what had really been the origin, and course of development, of man's actually attained faculties and that seemingly divine particle of reason or spirit in him. Such a doctrine, at more leisurable moments, would of course have its precepts to deliver on the embellishment, generally, of what is near at hand, on the adornment of life, till, in a not impracticable rule of conduct, one's existence, from day to day, came to be like a well-executed piece of music; that "perpetual motion" in things (so Marius figured the

matter to himself, under the old Greek imageries) according itself to a kind of cadence or harmony.

It was intelligible that this "aesthetic" philosophy might find itself (theoretically, at least, and by way of a curious question in casuistry, legitimate from its own point of view) weighing the claims of that eager, concentrated, impassioned realisation of experience, against those of the received morality. Conceiving its own function in a somewhat desperate temper, and becoming, as every high-strung form of sentiment, as the religious sentiment itself, may become, somewhat antinomian, when, in its effort towards the order of experiences it prefers, it is confronted with the traditional and popular morality, at points where that morality may look very like a convention, or a mere stage-property of the world, it would be found, from time to time, breaking beyond the limits of the actual moral order; perhaps not without some pleasurable excitement in so bold a venture.

With the possibility of some such hazard as this, in thought or even in practice—that it might be, though refining, or tonic even, in the case of those strong and in health, yet, as Pascal says of the kindly and temperate wisdom of Montaigne, "pernicious for those who have any natural tendency to impiety or vice," the line of reflection traced out above, was fairly chargeable.—Not, however, with "hedonism" and its supposed consequences. The blood, the heart, of Marius were still pure. He knew that his carefully considered theory of practice braced him, with the effect of a moral principle duly recurring to mind every morning, towards the work of a student, for which he might seem intended. Yet there were some among his acquaintance who jumped to the conclusion that, with the "Epicurean styte", he was making pleasure—pleasure, as they so poorly conceived it—the sole motive of life; and they precluded any exacter estimate of the situation by covering it with a high-sounding general term, through the vagueness of which they were enabled to see the severe and laborious youth in the vulgar company of Lais. Words like "hedonism"—terms of large and vague comprehension—above all when used for a purpose avowedly controversial, have ever been the worst examples of what are called "question-begging terms"; and in that late age in which Marius lived, amid the dust of so many centuries of philosophical debate, the air was full of them. Yet those who used that reproachful Greek term for the philosophy of pleasure, were hardly more likely than the old Greeks themselves (on whom regarding this very subject of the theory of pleasure, their masters in the art of thinking had so emphatically to impress the necessity of "making distinctions") to come to any very delicately correct ethical conclusions by a reasoning, which began with a general term, comprehensive enough to cover

pleasures so different in quality, in their causes and effects, as the pleasures of wine and love, of art and science, of religious enthusiasm and political enterprise, and of that taste or curiosity which satisfied itself with long days of serious study. Yet, in truth, each of those pleasurable modes of activity, may, in its turn, fairly become the ideal of the "hedonistic" doctrine. Really, to the phase of reflection through which Marius was then passing, the charge of "hedonism", whatever its true weight might be, was not properly applicable at all. Not pleasure, but fulness of life, and "insight" as conducting to that fulness—energy, variety, and choice of experience, including noble pain and sorrow even loves such as those in the exquisite old story of Apuleius, sincere and strenuous forms of the moral life, such as Seneca and Epictetus—whatever form of human life, in short, might be heroic, impassioned, ideal: from these the "new Cyrenaicism" of Marius took its criterion of values. It was a theory, indeed, which might properly be regarded as in great degree coincident with the main principle of the Stoics themselves, and an older version of the precept "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"—a doctrine so widely acceptable among the nobler spirits of that time. And, as with that, its mistaken tendency would lie in the direction of a kind of idolatry of mere life, or natural gift, or strength—*l'idôlatric des talents*.

To understand the various forms of ancient art and thought, the various forms of actual human feeling (the only new thing, in a world almost too opulent in what was old) to satisfy, with a kind of scrupulous equity, the claims of these concrete and actual objects on his sympathy, his intelligence, his senses—to "pluck out the heart of their mystery", and in turn become the interpreter of them to others; this had now defined itself for Marius as a very narrowly practical design: it determined his choice of a vocation to live by. It was the era of the *rhetoricians*, or *sophists*, as they were sometimes called; of men who came in some instances to great fame and fortune, by way of a literary cultivation of "science". That science, it has been often said, must have been wholly an affair of words. But in a world, confessedly so opulent in what was old, the work, even of genius, must necessarily consist very much in criticism; and, in the case of the more excellent specimens of his class, the rhetorician was, after all, the eloquent and effective interpreter, for the delighted ears of others, of what understanding himself had come by, in years of travel and study, of the beautiful house of art and thought which was the inheritance of the age. The emperor Marcus Aurelius, to whose service Marius had now been called, was himself, more or less openly, a "lecturer". That late world, amid many curiously vivid modern traits, had this spectacle, so familiar to ourselves, of the public lecturer or essayist; in some cases

adding to his other gifts that of the Christian preacher, who knows how to touch people's sensibilities on behalf of the suffering. To follow in the way of these successes, was the natural instinct of youthful ambition; and it was with no vulgar egotism that Marius, at the age of nineteen, determined, like many another young man of parts, to enter as a student of rhetoric at Rome.

Though the manner of his work was changed formally from poetry to prose, he remained, and must always be, of the poetic temper: by which, I mean, among other things, that quite independently of the general habit of that pensive age he lived much, and as it were by system, in reminiscence. Amid his eager grasping at the sensation, the consciousness, of the present, he had come to see that, after all, the main point of economy in the conduct of the present, was the question:—How will it look to me, at what shall I value it, this day next year?—that in any given day or month one's main concern was its impression for the memory. A strange trick memory sometimes played him; for, with no natural gradation, what was of last month, or of yesterday, of to-day even, would seem as far off, as entirely detached from him, as things of ten years ago. Detached from him, yet very real, there lay certain spaces of his life, in delicate perspective, under a favourable light; and, somehow, all the less fortunate detail and circumstance had parted from them. Such hours were oftenest those in which he had been helped by work of others to the pleasurable apprehension of art, of nature, or of life. "Not what I do, but what I am, under the power of this vision"—he would say to himself—"is what were indeed pleasing to the gods!"

And yet, with a kind of inconsistency in one who had taken for his philosophic ideal the *μονόχρονος ἡδονή* of Aristippus—the pleasure of the ideal present, of the mystic *now*—there would come, together with that precipitate sinking of things into the past, a desire, after all, to retain "what was so transitive". Could he but arrest, for others also, certain clauses of experience, as the imaginative memory presented them to himself! In those grand, hot summers, he would have imprisoned the very perfume of the flowers. To create, to live, perhaps, a little while beyond the allotted hours, if it were but in a fragment of perfect expression:—it was thus his longing defined itself for something to hold by amid the "perpetual flux". With men of his vocation, people were apt to say, words were things. Well! with him, words should be indeed things,—the word, the phrase, valuable in exact proportion to the transparency with which it conveyed to others the apprehension, the emotion, the mood, so vividly real within himself. *Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur*: Virile apprehension of the true nature of things, of the true nature of one's own impression,

first of all!—words would follow that naturally, a true understanding of one's self being ever the first condition of genuine style. Language delicate and measured, the delicate Attic phrase, for instance, in which the eminent Aristides could speak, was then a power to which people's hearts, and sometimes even their purses, readily responded. And there were many points, as Marius thought, on which the heart of that age greatly needed to be touched. He hardly knew how strong that old religious sense of responsibility, the conscience, as we call it, still was within him—a body of inward impressions, as real as those so highly valued outward ones—to offend against which, brought with it a strange feeling of disloyalty, as to a person. And the determination, adhered to with no misgiving, to add nothing, not so much as a transient sigh, to the great total of men's unhappiness, in his way through the world:—that too was something to rest on, in the drift of mere “appearances”.

All this would involve a life of industry, of industrious study, only possible through healthy rule, keeping clear the eye alike of body and soul. For the male element, the logical conscience asserted itself now, with opening manhood—asserted itself, even in his literary style, by a certain firmness of outline, that touch of the worker in metal, amid its richness. Already he blamed instinctively alike in his work and in himself, as youth so seldom does, all that had not passed a long and liberal process of erasure. The happy phrase or sentence was really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought. The suggestive force of the one master of his development, who had battled so hard with imaginative prose; the utterance, the golden utterance, of the other, so content with its living power of persuasion that he had never written at all,—in the commixture of these two qualities he set up his literary ideal, and this rare blending of grace with an intellectual rigour or astringency, was the secret of a singular expressiveness in it.

He acquired at this time a certain bookish air, the somewhat sombre habitude of the avowed scholar, which, though it never interfered with the perfect tone, “fresh and serenely disposed”, of the Roman gentleman, yet qualified it as by an interesting oblique trait, and frightened away some of his equals in age and rank. The sober discretion of his thoughts, his sustained habit of meditation, the sense of those negative conclusions enabling him to concentrate himself, with an absorption so entire, upon what is immediately *here and now*, gave him a peculiar manner of intellectual confidence, as of one who had indeed been initiated into a great secret.—Though with an air so disengaged, he seemed to be living so intently in the visible world! And now, in revolt against that pre-occupation with other persons, which

had so often perturbed his spirit, his wistful speculations as to what the real, the greater, experience might be, determined in him, not as the longing for love—to be with Cynthia, or Aspasia—but as a thirst for existence in exquisite places. The veil that was to be lifted for him lay over the works of the old masters of art, in places where nature also had used her mastery. And it was just at this moment that a summons to Rome reached him.

CHAPTER X

ON THE WAY

Mirum est ut animus agitatione motuque corporis excitetur.

Pliny's Letters.

MANY points in that train of thought, its harder and more energetic practical details especially, at first surmised but vaguely in the intervals of his visits to the tomb of Flavian, attained the coherence of formal principle amid the stirring incidents of the journey, which took him, still in all the buoyancy of his nineteen years and greatly expectant, to Rome. That summons had come from one of the former friends of his father in the capital, who had kept himself acquainted with the lad's progress, and assured of his parts, his courtly ways, above all of his beautiful penmanship, now offered him a place, virtually that of an *amanuensis*, near the person of the philosophic emperor. The old town-house of his family on the Cælian hill, so long neglected, might well require his personal care; and Marius, relieved a little by his preparations for travelling from a certain over-tension of spirit in which he had lived of late, was presently on his way, to await introduction to Aurelius, on his expected return home, after a first success, illusive enough as it was soon to appear, against the invaders from beyond the Danube.

The opening stage of his journey, through the firm, golden weather, for which he had lingered three days beyond the appointed time of starting—days brown with the first rains of autumn—brought him, by the byways among the lower slopes of the Apennines of Luna, to the town of Luca, a station on the Cassian Way; travelling so far mainly on foot, while the baggage followed under the care of his attendants. He wore a broad felt hat, in fashion not unlike a more modern pilgrim's, the neat head projecting from the collar of his gray *panula*, or travel ing mantle, sewed closely together over the breast, but with its two sides folded up upon the shoulders, to leave the arms free in walking, and was altogether so trim and fresh, that, as he

climbed the hill from Pisa, by the long steep lane through the olive-yards, and turned to gaze where he could just discern the cypresses of the old school garden, like two black lines down the yellow walls, a little child took possession of his hand, and, looking up at him with entire confidence, paced on bravely at his side, for the mere pleasure of his company, to the spot where the road declined again into the valley beyond. From this point, leaving the servants behind, he surrendered himself, a willing subject, as he walked, to the impressions of the road, and was almost surprised, both at the suddenness with which evening came on, and the distance from his old home at which it found him.

And at the little town of Luca, he felt that indescribable sense of a welcoming in the mere outward appearance of things, which seems to mark out certain places for the special purpose of evening rest, and gives them always a peculiar amiability in retrospect. Under the deepening twilight, the rough-tiled roofs seem to huddle together side by side, like one continuous shelter over the whole township, spread low and broad above the snug sleeping-rooms within; and the place one sees for the first time, and must tarry in but for a night, breathes the very spirit of home. The cottagers lingered at their doors for a few minutes as the shadows grew larger, and went to rest early; though there was still a glow along the road through the shorn cornfields, and the birds were still awake about the crumbling gray heights of an old temple. So quiet and air-swept was the place, you could hardly tell where the country left off in it, and the field-paths became its streets. Next morning he must needs change the manner of his journey. The light baggage-wagon returned, and he proceeded now more quickly, travelling a stage or two by post, along the Cassian Way, where the figures and incidents of the great high-road seemed already to tell of the capital, the one centre to which all were hastening, or had lately bidden adieu. That *Way* lay through the heart of the old, mysterious and visionary country of Etruria; and what he knew of its strange religion of the dead, reinforced by the actual sight of the funeral houses scattered so plentifully among the dwelling-places of the living, revived in him for a while, in all its strength, his old instinctive yearning towards those inhabitants of the shadowy land he had known in life. It seemed to him that he could half divine how time passed in those painted houses on the hillsides, among the gold and silver ornaments; the wrought armour and vestments, the drowsy and dead attendants; and the close consciousness of that vast population gave him no fear, but rather a sense of companionship, as he climbed the hills on foot behind the horses, through the genial afternoon.

The road, next day, passed below a town not less primitive, it might

seem, than its rocky perch—white rocks, that had long been glistening before him in the distance. Down the dewy paths the people were descending from it, to keep a holiday, high and low alike in rough, white-linen smocks. A homely old play was just begun in an open-air theatre, with seats hollowed out of the turf-grown slope. Marius caught the terrified expression of a child in its mother's arms, as it turned from the yawning mouth of a great mask, for refuge in her bosom. The way mounted, and descended again, down the steep street of another place, all resounding with the noise of metal under the hammer; for every house had its brazier's workshop, the bright objects of brass and copper gleaming, like lights in a cave, out of their dark roofs and corners. Around the anvils the children were watching the work, or ran to fetch water to the hissing, red-hot metal; and Marius too watched, as he took his hasty mid-day refreshment, a mess of chestnut-meal and cheese, while the swelling surface of a great copper water-vessel grew flowered all over with tiny petals under the skilful strokes. Towards dusk, a frantic woman at the roadside, stood and cried out the words of some philter, or malison, in verse, with weird motion of her hands, as the travellers passed, like a wild picture drawn from Virgil.

But all along, accompanying the superficial grace of these incidents of the way, Marius noted, more and more as he drew nearer to Rome, marks of the great plague. Under Hadrian and his successors, there had been many enactments to improve the condition of the slave. The *ergastula* were abolished. But no system of free labour had as yet succeeded. A whole mendicant population, artfully exaggerating every symptom and circumstance of misery, still hung around, or sheltered themselves within, the vast walls of their old, half-ruined task-houses. And for the most part they had been variously stricken by the pestilence. For once, the heroic level had been reached in rags, squints, scars—every caricature of the human type—ravaged beyond what could have been thought possible if it were to survive at all. Meantime, the farms were less carefully tended than of old: here and there they were lapsing into their natural wildness: some villas also were partly fallen into ruin. The picturesque, romantic Italy of a later time—the Italy of Claude and Salvator Rosa—was already forming, for the delight of the modern romantic traveller.

And again Marius was aware of a real change in things, on crossing the Tiber, as if some magic effect lay in that; though here, in truth, the Tiber was but a modest enough stream of turbid water. Nature, under the richer sky, seemed readier and more affluent, and man fitter to the conditions around him: even in people hard at work there appeared to be a less burdensome sense of the mere business of life.

How dreamily the women were passing up through the broad light and shadow of the steep streets with the great water-pots resting on their heads, like women of Caryæ, set free from slavery in old Greek temples. With what a fresh, primeval poetry was daily existence here impressed—all the details of the threshing-floor and the vineyard; the common farm-life even; the great bakers' fires aglow upon the road in the evening. In the presence of all this Marius felt for a moment like those old, early, unconscious poets, who created the famous Greek myths of Dionysus, and the Great Mother, out of the imagery of the wine-press and the ploughshare. And still the motion of the journey was bringing his thoughts to systematic form. He seemed to have grown to the fulness of intellectual manhood, on his way hither. The formative and literary stimulus, so to call it, of peaceful exercise which he had always observed in himself, doing its utmost now, the form and the matter of thought alike detached themselves clearly and with readiness from the healthfully excited brain.—“It is wonderful,” says Pliny, “how the mind is stirred to activity by brisk bodily exercise.” The presentable aspects of inmost thought and feeling became evident to him: the structure of all he meant, its order and outline, defined itself: his general sense of a fitness and beauty in words became effective in daintily pliant sentences, with all sorts of felicitous linking of figure to abstraction. It seemed just then as if the desire of the artist in him—that old longing to produce—might be satisfied by the exact and literal transcript of what was then passing around him, in simple prose, arresting the desirable moment as it passed, and prolonging its life a little.—To live in the concrete! To be sure, at least, of one's hold upon that!—Again, his philosophic scheme was but the reflection of the *data* of sense, and chiefly of sight, a reduction to the abstract, of the brilliant road he travelled on, through the sunshine.

But on the seventh evening there came a reaction in the cheerful flow of our traveller's thoughts, a reaction with which mere bodily fatigue, asserting itself at last over his curiosity, had much to do; and he fell into a mood, known to all passably sentimental wayfarers, as night deepens again and again over their path, in which all journeying, from the known to the unknown, comes suddenly to figure as a mere foolish truancy—like a child's running away from home—with the feeling that one had best return at once, even through the darkness. He had chosen to climb on foot, at his leisure, the long windings by which the road ascended to the place where that day's stage was to end, and found himself alone in the twilight, far behind the rest of his travelling-companions. Would the last zigzag, round and round those dark masses, half natural rock, half artificial substructure, ever bring him within the circuit of the walls above? It was now that a

startling incident turned those misgivings almost into actual fear. From the steep slope a heavy mass of stone was detached, after some whisperings among the trees above his head, and rushing down through the stillness fell to pieces in a cloud of dust across the road just behind him, so that he felt the touch upon his heel. That was sufficient, just then, to rouse out of its hiding-place his old vague fear of evil—of one's "enemies"—a distress, so much a matter of constitution with him, that at times it would seem that the best pleasures of life could but be snatched, as it were hastily, in one moment's forgetfulness of its dark, besetting influence. A sudden suspicion of hatred against him, of the nearness of "enemies", seemed all at once to alter the visible form of things, as with the child's hero, when he found the footprint on the sand of his peaceful, dreamy island. His elaborate philosophy had not put beneath his feet the terror of mere bodily evil; much less of "inexorable fate, and the noise of greedy Acheron".

The resting-place to which he presently came, in the keen, wholesome air of the market-place of the little hill-town, was a pleasant contrast to that last effort of his journey. The room in which he sat down to supper, unlike the ordinary Roman inns at that day, was trim and sweet. The firelight danced cheerfully upon the polished, three-wicked *lucerna* burning cleanly with the best oil, upon the white-washed walls, and the bunches of scarlet carnations set in glass goblets. The white wine of the place put before him, of the true colour and flavour of the grape, and with a ring of delicate foam as it mounted in the cup, had a reviving edge or freshness he had found in no other wine. These things had relieved a little the melancholy of the hour before; and it was just then that he heard the voice of one, newly arrived at the inn, making his way to the upper floor—a youthful voice, with a reassuring clearness of note, which completed his cure.

He seemed to hear that voice again in dreams, uttering his name: then, awake in the full morning light and gazing from the window, saw the guest of the night before, a very honourable-looking youth, in the rich habit of a military knight, standing beside his horse, and already making preparations to depart. It happened that Marius, too, was to take that day's journey on horseback. Riding presently from the inn, he overtook Cornelius—of the Twelfth Legion—advancing carefully down the steep street; and before they had issued from the gates of *Urbs-vetus*, the two young men had broken into talk together. They were passing along the street of the goldsmiths; and Cornelius must needs enter one of the workshops for the repair of some button or link of his knightly trappings. Standing in the doorway, Marius watched the work, as he had watched the brazier's business a few days

before, wondering most at the simplicity of its processes, a simplicity, however, on which only genius in that craft could have lighted.—By what unguessed-at stroke of hand, for instance, had the grains of precious metal associated themselves with so daintily regular a roughness, over the surface of the little casket yonder? And the conversation which followed, hence arising, left the two travellers with sufficient interest in each other to insure an easy companionship for the remainder of their journey. In time to come, Marius was to depend very much on the preferences, the personal judgments, of the comrade who now laid his hand so brotherly on his shoulder, as they left the workshop.

Itineris matutini gratiam capimus,—observes one of our scholarly travellers; and their road that day lay through a country, well-fitted, by the peculiarity of its landscape, to ripen a first acquaintance into intimacy; its superficial ugliness throwing the wayfarers back upon each other's entertainment in a real exchange of ideas, the tension of which, however, it would relieve, ever and anon, by the unexpected assertion of something singularly attractive. The immediate aspect of the land was, indeed, in spite of abundant olive and ilex, unpleasing enough. A river of clay seemed, "in some old night of time", to have burst up over valley and hill, and hardened there into fantastic shelves and slides and angles of cadaverous rock, up and down among the contorted vegetation; the hoary roots and trunks seeming to confess some weird kinship with them. But that was long ago; and these pallid hillsides needed only the declining sun, touching the rock with purple, and throwing deeper shadow into the immemorial foliage, to put on a peculiar, because a very grave and austere, kind of beauty; while the graceful outlines common to volcanic hills asserted themselves in the broader prospect. And, for sentimental Marius, all this was associated, by some perhaps fantastic affinity, with a peculiar trait of severity, beyond his guesses as to the secret of it, which mingled with the blitheness of his new companion. Concurring, indeed, with the condition of a Roman soldier, it was certainly something far more than the expression of military hardness, or *aseûsis*; and what was earnest, or even austere, in the landscape they had traversed together, seemed to have been waiting for the passage of this figure to interpret or inform it. Again, as in his early days with Flavian, a vivid personal presence broke through the dreamy idealism, which had almost come to doubt of other men's reality: reassuringly, indeed, yet not without some sense of a constraining tyranny over him from without.

For Cornelius, returning from the campaign, to take up his quarters on the *Palatine*, in the imperial guard, seemed to carry about with him, in that privileged world of comely usage to which he belonged, the atmosphere of some still more jealously exclusive circle. They

halted on the morrow at noon, not at an inn, but at the house of one of the young soldier's friends, whom they found absent, indeed, in consequence of the plague in those parts, so that after a mid-day rest only, they proceeded again on their journey. The great room of the villa, to which they were admitted, had lain long untouched; and the dust rose, as they entered, into the slanting bars of sunlight, that fell through the half-closed shutters. It was here, to while away the time, that Cornelius bethought himself of displaying to his new friend the various articles and ornaments of his knightly array—the breast-plate, the sandals and cuirass, lacing them on, one by one, with the assistance of Marius, and finally the great golden bracelet on the right arm, conferred on him by his general for an act of valour. And as he gleamed there, amid that odd interchange of light and shade, with the staff of a silken standard firm in his hand, Marius felt as if he were face to face, for the first time, with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world.

It was soon after they left this place, journeying now by carriage, that Rome was seen at last, with much excitement on the part of our travellers; Cornelius, and some others of whom the party then consisted, agreeing, chiefly for the sake of Marius, to hasten forward, that it might be reached by daylight, with a cheerful noise of rapid wheels as they passed over the flagstones. But the highest light upon the mausoleum of Hadrian was quite gone out, and it was dark, before they reached the *Flaminian Gate*. The abundant sound of water was the one thing that impressed Marius, as they passed down a long street, with many open spaces on either hand: Cornelius to his military quarters, and Marius to the old dwelling-place of his fathers.

CHAPTER XI

"THE MOST RELIGIOUS CITY IN THE WORLD"

MARIUS awoke early and passed curiously from room to room, noting for more careful inspection by and by the rolls of manuscripts. Even greater than his curiosity in gazing for the first time on this ancient possession, was his eagerness to look out upon Rome itself, as he pushed back curtain and shutter, and stepped forth in the fresh morning upon one of the many balconies, with an oft-repeated dream realised at last. He was certainly fortunate in the time of his coming to Rome. That old pagan world, of which Rome was the flower, had reached its perfection in the things of poetry and art—a perfection which indicated only too surely the eve of decline. As in some vast

intellectual museum, all its manifold products were intact and in their places, and with custodians also still extant, duly qualified to appreciate and explain them. And at no period of history had the material Rome itself been better worth seeing—lying there not less consummate than that world of pagan intellect which it represented in every phase of its darkness and light. The various work of many ages fell here harmoniously together, as yet untouched save by time, adding the final grace of a rich softness to its complex expression. Much which spoke of ages earlier than Nero, the great re-builder, lingered on, antique, quaint, immeasurably venerable, like the relics of the medieval city in the Paris of Lewis the Fourteenth: the work of Nero's own time had come to have that sort of old world and picturesque interest which the work of Lewis has for ourselves; while without stretching a parallel too far we might perhaps liken the architectural *finesses* of the archaic Hadrian to the more excellent products of our own Gothic revival. The temple of Antoninus and Faustina was still fresh in all the majesty of its closely arrayed columns of *cipollino*; but, on the whole, little had been added under the late and present emperors, and during fifty years of public quiet, a sober brown and gray had grown apace on things. The gilding on the roof of many a temple had lost its garishness: cornice and capital of polished marble shone out with all the crisp freshness of real flowers, amid the already mouldering travertine and brickwork, though the birds had built freely among them. What Marius then saw was in many respects, after all deduction of difference, more like the modern Rome than the enumeration of particular losses might lead us to suppose; the Renaissance, in its most ambitious mood and with amplest resources, having resumed the ancient classical tradition there, with no break or obstruction, as it had happened, in any very considerable work of the middle age. Immediately before him, on the square, steep height, where the earliest little old Rome had huddled itself together, arose the palace of the Cæsars. Half-veiling the vast substruction of rough, brown stone—line upon line of successive ages of builders—the trim, old-fashioned garden walks, under their closely-woven walls of dark glossy foliage, test of long and careful cultivation, wound gradually, among choice trees, statues and fountains, distinct and sparkling in the full morning sunlight, to the richly tinted mass of pavilions and corridors above, centering in the lofty, white-marble dwelling-place of Apollo himself.

How often had Marius looked forward to that first, free wandering through Rome, to which he now went forth, with a heat in the town sunshine (like a mist of fine gold-dust spread through the air) to the height of his desire, making the dun coolness of the narrow streets

welcome enough at intervals. He almost feared, descending the stair hastily, lest some unforeseen accident should snatch the little cup of enjoyment from him ere he passed the door. In such morning rambles in places new to him, life had always seemed to come at its fullest: it was then he could feel his youth, that youth the days of which he had already begun to count jealously, in entire possession. So the grave, pensive figure, a figure, be it said nevertheless, fresher far than often came across it now, moved through the old city towards the lodgings of Cornelius, certainly not by the most direct course, however eager to rejoin the friend of yesterday.

Bent as keenly on seeing as if his first day in Rome were to be also his last, the two friends descended along the *Vicus Tuscus*, with its rows of incense-stalls, into the *Via Nova*, where the fashionable people were busy shopping; and Marius saw with much amusement the frizzled heads, then *à la mode*. A glimpse of the *Marmorata*, the haven at the river-side, where specimens of all the precious marbles of the world were lying amid great white blocks from the quarries of Luna, took his thoughts for a moment to his distant home. They visited the flower-market, lingering where the *coronarii* pressed on them the newest species, and purchased zinnias, now in blossom (like painted flowers, thought Marius), to decorate the folds of their togas. Loitering to the other side of the Forum, past the great Galen's drug-shop, after a glance at the announcements of new poems on sale attached to the doorpost of a famous bookseller, they entered the curious library of the Temple of Peace, then a favourite resort of literary men, and read, fixed there for all to see, the *Diurnal* or Gazette of the day, which announced, together with births and deaths, prodigies and accidents, and much mere matter of business, the date and manner of the philosophic emperor's joyful return to his people; and, thereafter, with eminent names faintly disguised, what would carry that day's news, in many copies, over the provinces—a certain matter concerning the great lady, known to be dear to him, whom he had left at home. It was a story, with the development of which "society" had indeed for some time past edified or amused itself, rallying sufficiently from the panic of a year ago, not only to welcome back its ruler, but also to relish a *chronique scandaleuse*; and thus, when soon after Marius saw the world's wonder, he was already acquainted with the suspicions which have ever since hung about her name. Twelve o'clock was come before they left the Forum, waiting in a little crowd to hear the *Accensus*, according to old custom, proclaim the hour of noonday, at the moment when from the steps of the Senate-house, the sun could be seen standing between the *Rostra* and the *Græcostasis*. He exerted for this function a strength of voice, which confirmed in Marius a judgment

the modern visitor may share with him, that Roman throats and Roman chests, namely, must, in some peculiar way, be differently constructed from those of other people. Such judgment indeed he had formed in part the evening before, noting, as a religious procession passed him, how much noise a man and a boy could make, though not without a great deal of real music, of which in truth the Romans were then as ever passionately fond.

Hence the two friends took their way through the *Via Flaminia*, almost along the line of the modern *Corso*, already bordered with handsome villas, turning presently to the left, into the *Field-of-Mars*, still the playground of Rome. But the vast public edifices were grown to be almost continuous over the grassy expanse, represented now only by occasional open spaces of verdure and wild-flowers. In one of these a crowd was standing, to watch a party of athletes stripped for exercise. Marius had been surprised at the luxurious variety of the litters borne through Rome, where no carriage horses were allowed; and just then one far more sumptuous than the rest, with dainty appointments of ivory and gold, was carried by, all the town pressing with eagerness to get a glimpse of its most beautiful woman, as she passed rapidly. Yes! there, was the wonder of the world—the empress Faustina herself: Marius could distinguish, could distinguish clearly, the well-known profile, between the floating purple curtains.

For indeed all Rome was ready to burst into gaiety again, as it awaited with much real affection, hopeful and animated, the return of its emperor, for whose *ovation* various adornments were preparing along the streets through which the imperial procession would pass. He had left Rome just twelve months before, amid immense gloom. The alarm of a barbarian insurrection along the whole line of the Danube had happened at the moment when Rome was panic-stricken by the great pestilence.

In fifty years of peace, broken only by that conflict in the East from which Lucius Verus, among other curiosities, brought back the plague, war had come to seem a merely romantic, superannuated incident of bygone history. And now it was almost upon Italian soil. Terrible were the reports of the numbers and audacity of the assailants. Aurelius, as yet untried in war, and understood by a few only in the whole scope of a really great character, was known to the majority of his subjects as but a careful administrator, though a student of philosophy, perhaps, as we say, a *dilettante*. But he was also the visible centre of government, towards whom the hearts of a whole people turned, grateful for fifty years of public happiness—its good genius, its “Antonine”—whose fragile person might be foreseen speedily giving way under the trials of military life, with a disaster like that

of the slaughter of the legions by Arminius. Prophecies of the world's impending conflagration were easily credited: "the secular fire" would descend from heaven: superstitious fear had even demanded the sacrifice of a human victim.

Marcus Aurelius, always philosophically considerate of the humours of other people, exercising also that devout appreciation of every religious claim which was one of his characteristic habits, had invoked, in aid of the commonwealth, not only all native gods, but all foreign deities as well, however strange.—"Help! Help! in the ocean space!" A multitude of foreign priests had been welcomed to Rome, with their various peculiar religious rites. The sacrifices made on this occasion were remembered for centuries; and the starving poor, at least, found some satisfaction in the flesh of those herds of "white bulls", which came into the city, day after day, to yield the savour of their blood to the gods.

In spite of all this, the legions had but followed their standards despondently. But prestige, personal prestige, the name of "Emperor", still had its magic power over the nations. The mere approach of the Roman army made an impression on the barbarians. Aurelius and his colleague had scarcely reached Aquileia when a deputation arrived to ask for peace. And now the two imperial "brothers" were returning home at leisure; were waiting, indeed, at a villa outside the walls, till the capital had made ready to receive them. But although Rome was thus in genial reaction, with much relief, and hopefulness against the winter, facing itself industriously in damask of red and gold, those two enemies were still unmistakably extant; the barbarian army of the Danube was but over-awed for a season; and the plague, as we saw when Marius was on his way to Rome, was not to depart till it had done a large part in the formation of the melancholy picturesque of modern Italy—till it had made, or prepared for the making of the Roman *Campagna*. The old, unaffected, really pagan, peace or gaiety, of Antoninus Pius—that genuine though unconscious humanist—was gone for ever. And again and again, throughout this day of varied observation, Marius had been reminded, above all else, that he was not merely in "the most religious city of the world", as one had said, but that Rome was become the romantic home of the wildest superstition. Such superstition presented itself almost as religious mania in many an incident of his long ramble,—incidents to which he gave his full attention, though contending in some measure with a reluctance on the part of his companion, the motive of which he did not understand till long afterwards. Marius certainly did not allow this reluctance to deter his own curiosity. Had he not come to Rome partly under poetic vocation, to receive all those things, the very impress

of life itself, upon the visual, the imaginative, organ, as upon a mirror; to reflect them; to transmute them into golden words? He must observe that strange medley of superstition, that centuries' growth, layer upon layer, of the curiosities of religion (one faith jostling another out of place) at least for its picturesque interest, and as an indifferent outsider might, not too deeply concerned in the question which, if any of them, was to be the survivor.

Superficially, at least, the Roman religion, allying itself with much diplomatic economy to possible rivals, was in possession, as a vast and complex system of usage, intertwining itself with every detail of public and private life, attractively enough for those who had but "the historic temper", and a taste for the past, however much a Lucian might depreciate it. Roman religion, as Marius knew, had, indeed, been always something to be done, rather than something to be thought, or believed, or loved; something to be done in minutely detailed manner, at a particular time and place, correctness in which had long been a matter of laborious learning with a whole school of ritualists—as also, now and again, a matter of heroic sacrifice with certain exceptionally devout souls, as when Caius Fabius Dorso, with his life in his hand, succeeded in passing the sentinels of the invading Gauls to perform a sacrifice on the Quirinal, and, thanks to the divine protection, had returned in safety. So jealous was the distinction between sacred and profane, that, in the matter of the "regarding of days", it had made more than half the year a holiday. Aurelius had, indeed, ordained that there should be no more than a hundred and thirty-five festival days in the year; but in other respects he had followed in the steps of his predecessor, Antoninus Pius—commended especially for his "religion", his conspicuous devotion to its public ceremonies—and whose coins are remarkable for their reference to the oldest and most hieratic types of Roman mythology. Aurelius had succeeded in more than healing the old feud between philosophy and religion, displaying himself, in singular combination, as at once the most zealous of philosophers and the most devout of polytheists, and lending himself, with an air of conviction, to all the pageantries of public worship. To his pious recognition of that one orderly spirit, which, according to the doctrine of the Stoics, diffuses itself through the world, and animates it—a recognition taking the form, with him, of a constant effort towards inward likeness thereto, in the harmonious order of his own soul—he had added a warm personal devotion towards the whole multitude of the old national gods, and a great many new foreign ones besides, by him, at least, not ignobly conceived. If the comparison may be reverently made, there was something here of the method by which the catholic church has

added the *cultus* of the saints to its worship of the one Divine Being.

And to the view of the majority, though the emperor, as the personal centre of religion, entertained the hope of converting his people to philosophic faith, and had even pronounced certain public discourses for their instruction in it, that polytheistic devotion was his most striking feature. Philosophers, indeed, had, for the most part, thought with Seneca, "that a man need not lift his hands to heaven, nor ask the sacristan's leave to put his mouth to the ear of an image, that his prayers might be heard the better."—Marcus Aurelius, "a master in Israel," knew all that well enough. Yet his outward devotion was much more than a concession to popular sentiment, or a mere result of that sense of fellow-citizenship with others, which had made him again and again, under most difficult circumstances, an excellent comrade. Those others, too!—amid all their ignorances, what were they but instruments in the administration of the Divine Reason, "from end to end sweetly and strongly disposing all things"? Meantime "Philosophy" itself had assumed much of what we conceive to be the religious character. It had even cultivated the habit, the power, of "spiritual direction"; the troubled soul making recourse in its hour of destitution, or amid the distractions of the world, to this or that director—*philosopho suo*—who could really best understand it.

And it had been in vain that the old, grave and discreet religion of Rome had set itself, according to its proper genius, to prevent or subdue all trouble and disturbance in men's souls. In religion, as in other matters, plebeians, as such, had a taste for movement, for revolution; and it had been ever in the most populous quarters that religious changes began. To the apparatus of foreign religion, above all, recourse had been made in times of public disquietude or sudden terror; and in those great religious celebrations, before his proceeding against the barbarians, Aurelius had even restored the solemnities of Isis, prohibited in the capital since the time of Augustus, making no secret of his worship of that goddess, though her temple had been actually destroyed by authority in the reign of Tiberius. Her singular and in many ways beautiful ritual was now popular in Rome. And then—what the enthusiasm of the swarming plebeian quarters had initiated, was sure to be adopted, sooner or later, by women of fashion. A blending of all the religions of the ancient world had been accomplished. The new gods had arrived, had been welcomed, and found their places; though, certainly, with no real security, in any adequate ideal of the divine nature itself in the background of men's minds, that the presence of the new-comer should be edifying, or even refining. High and low addressed themselves to all deities alike without scruple; confusing them together when they prayed, and in

the old, authorised, threefold veneration of their visible images, by flowers, incense, and ceremonial lights—those beautiful usages, which the church, in her way through the world, ever making spoil of the world's goods for the better uses of the human spirit, took up and sanctified in her service.

And certainly "the most religious city in the world" took no care to veil its devotion, however fantastic. The humblest house had its little chapel or shrine, its image and lamp; while almost every one seemed to exercise some religious function and responsibility. Colleges, composed for the most part of slaves and of the poor, provided for the service of the *Compitalian Lares*—the gods who presided, respectively, over the several quarters of the city. In one street, Marius witnessed an incident of the festival of the patron deity of that neighbourhood, the way being strewn with box, the houses tricked out gaily in such poor finery as they possessed, while the ancient idol was borne through it in procession, arrayed in gaudy attire the worse for wear. Numerous religious clubs had their stated anniversaries, on which the members issued with much ceremony from their guild-hall, or *schola*, and traversed the thoroughfares of Rome, preceded, like the confraternities of the present day, by their sacred banners, to offer sacrifice before some famous image. Black with the perpetual smoke of lamps and incense, oftenest old and ugly, perhaps on that account the more likely to listen to the desires of the suffering—had not those sacred effigies sometimes given sensible tokens that they were aware? The image of the Fortune of Women—*Fortuna Muliebris*, in the Latin Way, had spoken (not once only) and declared; *Bene me, Matrona! vidistis riteque dedicastis!* The Apollo of Cumæ had wept during three whole nights and days. The images in the temple of Juno Sospita had been seen to sweat. Nay! there was blood—divine blood—in the hearts of some of them: the images in the Grove of Feronia had sweated blood!

From one and all Cornelius had turned away: like the "atheist" of whom Apuleius tells he had never once raised hand to lip in passing image or sanctuary, and had parted from Marius finally when the latter determined to enter the crowded doorway of a temple, on their return into the Forum, below the Palatine hill, where the mothers were pressing in, with a multitude of every sort of children, to touch the lightning-struck image of the wolf-nurse of Romulus—so tender to little ones!—just discernible in its dark shrine, amid a blaze of lights. Marius gazed after his companion of the day, as he mounted the steps to his lodging, singing to himself, as it seemed. Marius failed precisely to catch the words.

And, as the rich, fresh evening came on, there was heard all over Rome, far above a whisper, the whole town seeming hushed to catch

it distinctly, the lively, reckless call to "play", from the sons and daughters of foolishness, to those in whom their life was still green—*Donec virenti canities abest!*—*Donec virenti canities abest!* Marius could hardly doubt how Cornelius would have taken the call. And as for himself, slight as was the burden of positive moral obligation with which he had entered Rome, it was to no wasteful and vagrant affections, such as these, that his Epicureanism had committed him.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIVINITY THAT DOTH HEDGE A KING

But ah! Mæcenas is yclad in claye,
And great Augustus long ygoe is dead,
And all the worthies ligger wrapt in lead,
That matter made for poets on to playe.

MARCUS AURELIUS who, though he had little relish for them himself, had ever been willing to humour the taste of his people for magnificent spectacles, was received back to Rome with the lesser honours of the *Ovation*, conceded by the Senate (so great was the public sense of deliverance) with even more than the laxity which had become its habit under imperial rule, for there had been no actual bloodshed in the late achievement. Clad in the civic dress of the chief Roman magistrate, and with a crown of myrtle upon his head, his colleague similarly attired walking beside him, he passed up to the Capitol on foot, though in solemn procession along the Sacred Way, to offer sacrifice to the national gods. The victim, a goodly sheep, whose image we may well see between the pig and the ox of the *Suovetaurilia*, filleted and stoled almost like some ancient canon of the church, on a sculptured fragment in the Forum, was conducted by the priests, clad in rich white vestments, and bearing their sacred utensils of massive gold, immediately behind a company of flute-players, led by the great choir-master, or *conductor*, of the day, visibly tetchy or delighted, according as the instruments he ruled with his tuning-rod, rose, more or less adequately amid the difficulties of the way, to the dream of perfect music in the soul within him. The vast crowd, including the soldiers of the triumphant army, now restored to wives and children, all alike in holiday whiteness, had left their houses early in the fine, dry morning, in a real affection for "the father of his country", to await the procession, the two princes having spent the preceding night outside the walls, at the old *Villa of the Republic*. Marius, full of curiosity, had taken his position with much care; and

stood to see the world's masters pass by, at an angle from which he could command the view of a great part of the processional route, sprinkled with fine yellow sand, and punctiliously guarded from profane footsteps.

The coming of the pageant was announced by the clear sound of the flutes, heard at length above the acclamations of the people—*Salve Imperator! —Dii te servant!*—shouted in regular time, over the hills. It was on the central figure, of course, that the whole attention of Marius was fixed from the moment when the procession came in sight, preceded by the lictors with gilded *fascies*, the imperial image-bearers, and the pages carrying lighted torches; a band of knights, among whom was Cornelius in complete military array, following. Amply swathed about in the folds of a richly worked toga, after a manner now long since become obsolete with meaner persons, Marius beheld a man of about five-and-forty years of age, with prominent eyes—eyes, which although demurely downcast during this essentially religious ceremony, were by nature broadly and benignantly observant. He was still, in the main, as we see him in the busts which represent his gracious and courtly youth, when Hadrian had playfully called him, not *Verus*, after the name of his father, but *Verissimus*, for his candour of gaze, and the bland capacity of the brow, which, below the brown hair, clustering thickly as of old, shone out low, broad, and clear, and still without a trace of the trouble of his lips. You saw the brow of one who, amid the blindness or perplexity of the people about him, understood all things clearly; the dilemma, to which his experience so far had brought him, between Chance with meek resignation and a Providence with boundless possibilities and hope, being for him at least distinctly defined.

That outward serenity, which he valued so highly as a point of manner or expression not unworthy the care of a public minister—outward symbol, it might be thought, of the inward religious serenity it had been his constant purpose to maintain—was increased to-day by his sense of the gratitude of his people; that his life had been one of such gifts and blessings as made his person seem in very deed divine to them. Yet the cloud of some reserved internal sorrow, passing from time to time into an expression of fatigue and effort, of loneliness amid the shouting multitude, might have been detected there by the more observant—as if the sagacious hint of one of his officers, “The soldiers can’t understand you, they don’t know Greek,” were applicable always to his relationships with other people. The nostrils and mouth seemed capable almost of peevishness; and Marius noted in them, as in the hands, and in the spare body generally, what was new to his experience—something of asceticism, as we say,

of a bodily gymnastic, by which, although it told pleasantly in the clear blue humours of the eye, the flesh had scarcely been an equal gainer with the spirit. It was hardly the expression of "the healthy mind in the healthy body", but rather of a sacrifice of the body to the soul, its needs and aspirations, that Marius seemed to divine in this assiduous student of the Greek sages—a sacrifice, in truth, far beyond the demands of their very saddest philosophy of life.

Dignify thyself with modesty and simplicity for thine ornaments!—had been ever a maxim with this dainty and high-bred Stoic, who still thought *manners* a true part of *morals*, according to the old sense of the term, and who regrets now and again that he cannot control his thoughts equally well with his countenance. That outward composure was deepened during the solemnities of this day by an air of pontifical abstraction; which, though very far from being pride—nay, a sort of humility rather—yet gave, to himself, an air of unapproachableness, and to his whole proceeding, in which every minutest act was considered, the character of a ritual. Certainly, there was no haughtiness, social, moral, or even philosophic, in Aurelius, who had realised, under more trying conditions perhaps than any one before, that no element of humanity could be alien from him. Yet, as he walked to-day, the centre of ten thousand observers, with eyes discreetly fixed on the ground, veiling his head at times and muttering very rapidly the words of the "supplications", there was something many spectators may have noted as a thing new in their experience, for Aurelius, unlike his predecessors, took all this with absolute seriousness. The doctrine of the sanctity of kings, that, in the words of Tacitus, Princes are as Gods—*Principes instar deorum esse*—seemed to have taken a novel, because a literal, sense. For Aurelius, indeed, the old legend of his descent from Numa, from Numa who had talked with the gods, meant much. Attached in very early years to the service of the altars, like many another noble youth, he was "observed to perform all his sacerdotal functions with a constancy and exactness unusual at that age; was soon a master of the sacred music; and had all the forms and ceremonies by heart". And now, as the emperor, who had not only a vague divinity about his person, but was actually the chief religious functionary of the state, recited from time to time the forms of invocation, he needed not the help of the prompter, or *ceremoniarius*, who then approached, to assist him by whispering the appointed words in his ear. It was that pontifical abstraction which then impressed itself on Marius as the leading outward characteristic of Aurelius; though to him alone, perhaps, in that vast crowd of observers, it was no strange thing, but a matter he had understood from of old.

Some fanciful writers have assigned the origin of these triumphal processions to the mythic pomps of Dionysus, after his conquests in the East; the very word *Triumph* being, according to this supposition, only *Thriambos*—the Dionysiac Hymn. And certainly the younger of the two imperial “brothers”, who, with the effect of a strong contrast, walked beside Aurelius, and shared the honours of the day, might well have reminded people of the delicate Greek god of flowers and wine. This new conqueror of the East was now about thirty-six years old, but with his scrupulous care for all the advantages of his person, and a soft curling beard powdered with gold, looked many years younger. One result of the more genial element in the wisdom of Aurelius had been that, amid most difficult circumstances, he had known throughout life how to act in union with persons of character very alien from his own; to be more than loyal to the colleague, the younger brother in empire, he had too lightly taken to himself, five years before, then an uncorrupt youth, “skilled in manly exercises and fitted for war”. When Aurelius thanks the gods that a brother had fallen to his lot, whose character was a stimulus to the proper care of his own, one sees that this could only have happened in the way of an example, putting him on his guard against insidious faults. But it is with sincere amiability that the imperial writer, who was indeed little used to be ironical, adds that the lively respect and affection of the junior had often “gladdened” him. To be able to make his use of the flower, when the fruit perhaps was useless or poisonous:—that was one of the practical successes of his philosophy; and his people noted, with a blessing, “the concord of the two Augusti”.

The younger, certainly, possessed in full measure that charm of a constitutional freshness of aspect which may defy for a long time extravagant or erring habits of life; a physiognomy, healthy-looking, cleanly, and firm, which seemed unassociable with any form of self-torment, and made one think of the muzzle of some young hound or roe, such as human beings invariably like to stroke—a physiognomy, in effect, with all the goodness of animalism of the finer sort, though still wholly animal. The charm was that of the blond head, the unshrinking gaze, the warm tints: neither more nor less than one may see every English summer, in youth, manly enough, and with the stuff which makes brave soldiers, in spite of the natural kinship it seems to have with playthings and gay flowers. But innate in Lucius Verus there was that more than womanly fondness for fond things, which had made the atmosphere of the old city of Antioch, heavy with centuries of voluptuousness, a poison to him: he had come to love his delicacies best out of season, and would have gilded the very flowers. But with a wonderful power of self-obliteration, the elder

brother at the capital had directed his procedure successfully, and allowed him, become now also the husband of his daughter Lucilla, the credit of a "Conquest", though Verus had certainly not returned a conqueror over himself. He had returned, as we know, with the plague in his company, along with many another strange creature of his folly; and when the people saw him publicly feeding his favourite horse *Fleet* with almonds and sweet grapes, wearing the animal's image in gold, and finally building it a tomb, they felt, with some un-sentimental misgiving, that he might revive the manners of Nero.—What if, in the chances of war, he should survive the protecting genius of that elder brother?

He was all himself to-day: and it was with much wistful curiosity that Marius regarded him. For Lucius Verus was, indeed, but the highly expressive type of a class,—the true son of his father, adopted by Hadrian. Lucius Verus the elder, also, had had the like strange capacity for misusing the adornments of life, with a masterly grace; as if such misusing were, in truth, the quite adequate occupation of an intelligence, powerful, but distorted by cynical philosophy or some disappointment of the heart. It was almost a sort of genius, of which there had been instances in the imperial purple: it was to ascend the throne, a few years later, in the person of one, now a hopeful little lad at home in the palace; and it had its following, of course, among the wealthy youth of Rome, who concentrated no inconsiderable force of shrewdness and tact upon minute details of attire and manner, as upon the one thing needful. Certainly, flowers were pleasant to the eye. Such things had even their sober use, as making the outside of human life superficially attractive, and thereby promoting the first steps towards friendship and social amity. But what precise place could there be for Verus and his peculiar charm, in that *Wisdom*, that Order of divine Reason "reaching from end to end, strongly and sweetly disposing all things", from the vision of which Aurelius came down, so tolerant of persons like him? Into such vision Marius too was certainly well-fitted to enter, yet, noting the actual perfection of Lucius Verus after his kind, his undeniable achievement of the select, in all minor things, felt, though with some suspicion of himself, that he entered into, and could understand, this other so dubious sort of character also. There was a voice in the theory he had brought to Rome with him which whispered "nothing is either great nor small"; as there were times when he could have thought that, as the "gram-marian's" or the artist's ardour of soul may be satisfied by the perfecting of the theory of a sentence, or the adjustment of two colours, so his own life also might have been fulfilled by an enthusiastic quest after perfection;—say, in the flowering and folding of a toga.

The emperors had burned incense before the image of Jupiter, arrayed in its most gorgeous apparel, amid sudden shouts from the people of *Salve Imperator!* turned now from the living princes to the deity, as they discerned his countenance through the great open doors. The imperial brothers had deposited their crowns of myrtle on the richly embroidered lapcloth of the god; and, with their chosen guests, sat down to a public feast in the temple itself. There followed what was, after all, the great event of the day:—an appropriate discourse, a discourse almost wholly *de contemptu mundi*, delivered in the presence of the assembled Senate, by the emperor Aurelius, who had thus, on certain rare occasions, condescended to instruct his people, with the double authority of a chief pontiff and a laborious student of philosophy. In those lesser honours of the *ovation*, there had been no attendant slave behind the emperors, to make mock of their effulgence as they went; and it was as if with the discretion proper to a philosopher, and in fear of a jealous Nemesis, he had determined himself to protest in time against the vanity of all outward success.

The Senate was assembled to hear the emperor's discourse in the vast hall of the *Curia Julia*. A crowd of high-bred youths idled around, or on the steps before the doors, with the marvellous toilets Marius had noticed in the *Via Nova*; in attendance, as usual, to learn by observation the minute points of senatorial procedure. Marius had already some acquaintance with them, and passing on found himself suddenly in the presence of what was still the most august assembly the world had seen. Under Aurelius, ever full of veneration for this ancient traditional guardian of public religion, the Senate had recovered all its old dignity and independence. Among its members many hundreds in number, visibly the most distinguished of them all, Marius noted the great sophists or rhetoricians of the day, in all their magnificence. The antique character of their attire, and the ancient mode of wearing it, still surviving with them, added to the imposing character of their persons, while they sat, with their staves of ivory in their hands, on their curule chairs—almost the exact pattern of the chair still in use in the Roman church when a Bishop *pontificates* at the divine offices—"tranquil and unmoved with a majesty that seemed divine", as Marius thought, like the old Gaul of the Invasion. The rays of the early November sunset slanted full upon the audience, and made it necessary for the officers of the Court to draw the purple curtains over the windows, adding to the solemnity of the scene. In the depth of those warm shadows, surrounded by her ladies, the empress Faustina was seated to listen. The beautiful Greek statue of Victory, which since the days of Augustus had presided over the assemblies of the Senate, had been brought into the hall, and placed near the chair of

the emperor; who, after rising to perform a brief sacrificial service in its honour, bowing reverently to the assembled fathers left and right, took his seat and began to speak.

There was a certain melancholy grandeur in the very simplicity or triteness of the theme: as it were the very quintessence of all the old Roman epitaphs, of all that was monumental in that city of tombs, layer upon layer of dead things and people. As if in the very fervour of disillusion, he seemed to be composing—ὡςπερ ἐπιγραφαὶ χρόνων καὶ ὅλων ἔθνων—the sepulchral titles of ages and whole peoples; nay! the very epitaph of the living Rome itself. The grandeur of the ruins of Rome,—heroism in ruin: it was under the influence of an imaginative anticipation of this, that he appeared to be speaking. And though the impression of the actual greatness of Rome on that day was but enhanced by the strain of contempt, falling with an accent of pathetic conviction from the emperor himself, and gaining from his pontifical pretensions the authority of a religious intimation, yet the curious interest of the discourse lay in this, that Marius, for one as he listened, seemed to foresee a grassgrown Forum, the broken ways of the Capitol, and the Palatine hill itself in humble occupation. That impression connected itself with what he had already noted of an actual change even then coming over Italian scenery. Throughout, he could trace something of a humour into which Stoicism at all times tends to fall, the tendency to cry, *Abase yourselves!* There was here the almost inhuman impassibility of one who had thought too closely on the paradoxical aspect of the love of posthumous fame. With the ascetic pride which lurks under all Platonism, resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth—the imperial Stoic, like his true descendant, the hermit of the middle age, was ready, in no friendly humour, to mock, there in its narrow bed, the corpse which had made so much of itself in life. Marius could but contrast all that with his own Cyrenaic eagerness, just then, to taste and see and touch; reflecting on the opposite issues deducible from the same text. “The world, within me and without, flows away like a river,” he had said; “therefore let me make the most of what is here and now.”—“The world and the thinker upon it, are consumed like a flame,” said Aurelius, “therefore will I turn away my eyes from vanity: renounce: withdraw myself alike from all affections.” He seemed tacitly to claim as a sort of personal dignity, that he was very familiarly versed in this view of things, and could discern a death’s-head everywhere. Now and again Marius was reminded of the saying that “with the Stoics all people are the vulgar save themselves”; and at times the orator seemed to have forgotten his audience, and to be speaking only to himself.

"Art thou in love with men's praises, get thee into the very soul of them, and seel—see what judges they be, even in those matters which concern themselves. Wouldst thou have their praise after death, bethink thee, that they who shall come hereafter, and with whom thou wouldst survive by thy great name, will be but as these, whom here thou hast found so hard to live with. For of a truth, the soul of him who is aflutter upon renown after death, presents not this aright to itself, that of all whose memory he would have each one will likewise very quickly depart, until memory herself be put out, as she journeys on by means of such as are themselves on the wing but for a while, and are extinguished in their turn.—Making so much of those thou wilt never see, it is as if thou wouldst have had those who were before thee discourse fair things concerning thee.

"To him, indeed, whose wit hath been whetted by true doctrine, that well-worn sentence of Homer sufficeth, to guard him against regret and fear.—

Like the race of leaves

The race of man is:—

The wind in autumn strows

The earth with old leaves: then the spring the woods with new
endows.

Leaves! little leaves—thy children, thy flatterers, thine enemies! Leaves in the wind, those who would devote thee to darkness, who scorn or miscall thee here, even as they also whose great fame shall outlast them. For all these, and the like of them, are born indeed in the spring season—*ἔαρος ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη*: and soon a wind hath scattered them, and thereafter the wood peopleth itself again with another generation of leaves. And what is common to all of them is but the littleness of their lives: and yet wouldst thou love and hate, as if these things should continue for ever. In a little while thine eyes also will be closed, and he on whom thou perchance hast leaned thyself be himself a burden upon another.

"Bethink thee often of the swiftness with which the things that are, or are even now coming to be, are swept past thee: that the very substance of them is but the perpetual motion of water: that there is almost nothing which continueth: of that bottomless depth of time, so close at thy side. Folly! to be lifted up, or sorrowful, or anxious, by reason of things like these. Think of infinite matter, and thy portion—how tiny a particle, of it! of infinite time, and thine own brief point there; of destiny, and the jot thou art in it; and yield thyself readily to the wheel of Clotho, to spin of thee what web she will.

"As one casting a ball from his hand, the nature of things hath had its aim with every man, not as to the ending only, but the first beginning of his course, and passage thither. And hath the ball any profit of its rising, or loss as it descendeth again, or in its fall? or the bubble, as it groweth or breaketh on the air? or the flame of the lamp, from the beginning to the end of its brief story?

"All but at this present that future is, in which nature, who disposeth all things in order, will transform whatsoever thou now seest, fashioning from its substance somewhat else, and therefrom somewhat else in its turn, lest the world grow old. We are such stuff as dreams are made of—disturbing dreams. Awake then! and see thy dream as it is, in comparison with that erewhile it seemed to thee.

"And for me, especially, it were well to mind those many mutations of empire in time past; therein peeping also upon the future, which must needs be of the species with what hath been, continuing ever within the rhythm and number of things which really are; so that in forty years one may note of man and of his ways little less than in a thousand. Ah! from this higher place, look we down upon the shipwrecks and the calm! Consider, for example, how the world went, under the emperor Vespasian. They are married and given in marriage, they breed children; love hath its way with them; they heap up riches for others or for themselves; they are murmuring at things as then they are; they are seeking for great place; crafty, flattering, suspicious, waiting upon the death of others:—festivals, business, war, sickness, dissolution: and now their whole life is no longer anywhere at all. Pass on to the reign of Trajan: all things continue the same: and that life also is no longer anywhere at all. Ah! but look again, and consider, one after another, as it were the sepulchral inscriptions of all peoples and times, according to one pattern.—What multitudes, after their utmost striving—a little afterwards! were dissolved again into their dust.

"Think again of life as it was far off in the ancient world; as it must be when we shall be gone; as it is now among the wild heathen. How many have never heard your names and mine, or will soon forget them! How soon may those who shout my name to-day begin to revile it, because glory, and the memory of men, and all things beside, are but vanity—a sand-heap under the senseless wind, the barking of dogs, the quarrelling of children, weeping incontinently upon their laughter.

"This hasteth to be; that other to have been: of that which now cometh to be, even now somewhat hath been extinguished. And wilt thou make thy measure of any one of these things? It were as if one set his love upon the swallow, as it passeth out of sight through the air!

"Bethink thee often, in all contentions public and private, of those whom men have remembered by reason of their anger and vehement spirit—those famous rages, and the occasions of them—the great fortunes, and misfortunes, of men's strife of old. What are they all now, and the dust of their battles? Dust and ashes indeed; a fable, a mythus, or not so much as that. Yes! keep those before thine eyes who took this or that, the like of which happeneth to thee, so hardly; were so querulous, so agitated. And where again are they? Wouldst thou have it not otherwise with thee?

"Consider how quickly all things vanish away—their bodily structure into the general substance; the very memory of them into that great gulf and abysm of past thoughts. Ah! 'tis on a tiny space of earth thou art creeping through life—a pigmy soul carrying a dead body to its grave.

"Let death put thee upon the consideration both of thy body and thy soul: what an atom of all matter hath been distributed to thee; what a little particle of the universal mind. Turn thy body about, and consider what thing it is, and that which old age, and lust, and the languor of disease can make of it. Or come to its substantial and casual qualities, its very type: contemplate that in itself, apart from the accidents of matter, and then measure also the span of time for which the nature of things, at the longest, will maintain that special type. Nay! in the very principles and first constituents of things corruption hath its part—so much dust, humour, stench, and scraps of bone! Consider that thy marbles are but the earth's callosities, thy gold and silver its *faces*; this silken robe but a worm's bedding, and thy purple an unclean fish. Ah! and thy life's breath is not otherwise, as it passeth out of matters like these, into the like of them again.

"For the one soul in things, taking matter like wax in the hands, moulds and remoulds—how hastily!—beast, and plant, and the babe, in turn: and that which dieth hath not slipped out of the order of nature, but, remaining therein, hath also its changes there, disparting into those elements of which nature herself and thou too, art compacted. She changes without murmuring. The oaken chest falls to pieces with no more complaining than when the carpenter fitted it together. If one told thee certainly that on the morrow thou shouldst die, or at the furthest on the day after, it would be no great matter to thee to die on the day after to-morrow, rather than to-morrow. Strive to think it a thing no greater that thou wilt die—not to-morrow, but a year, or two years, or ten years from to-day.

"I find that all things are now as they were in the days of our buried ancestors—all things sordid in their elements, trite by long usage, and yet ephemeral. How ridiculous, then, how like a countryman in town,

is he, who wonders at aught. Doth the sameness, the repetition of the public shows, weary thee? Even so doth that likeness of events in the spectacle of the world. And so must it be with thee to the end. For the wheel of the world hath ever the same motion, upward and downward, from generation to generation. When, when, shall time give place to eternity?

"If there be things which trouble thee thou canst put them away, inasmuch as they have their being but in thine own notion concerning them. Consider what death is, and how, if one does but detach from it the appearances, the notions, that hang about it, resting the eye upon it as in itself it really is, it must be thought of but as an effect of nature, and that man but a child whom an effect of nature shall affright. Nay! not function and effect of nature, only; but a thing profitable also to herself.

"To cease from action—the ending of thine effort to think and do: there is no evil in that. Turn thy thought to the ages of man's life, boyhood, youth, maturity, old age; the change in every one of these also is a dying, but evil nowhere. Thou climbedst into the ship, thou hast made thy voyage and touched the shore: go forth now! Be it into some other life: the divine breath is everywhere, even there. Be it into forgetfulness for ever: at least thou wilt rest from the beating of sensible images upon thee, from the passions which pluck thee this way and that like an unfeeling toy, from those long marches of the intellect, from thy toilsome ministry to the flesh.

"Art thou yet more than dust and ashes and bare bone—a name only, or not so much as that, which, also, is but whispering and a resonance, kept alive from mouth to mouth of dying abjects who have hardly known themselves; how much less thee, dead so long ago!

"When thou lookest upon a wise man, a lawyer, a captain of war, think upon another gone. When thou seest thine own face in the glass, call up there before thee one of thine ancestors—one of those old Cæsars. Lo! everywhere, thy double before thee! Thereon, let the thought occur to thee: And where are they? anywhere at all, for ever? And thou, thyself—how long? Art thou blind to that thou art—thy matter, how temporal; and thy function, the nature of thy business? Yet tarry, at least, till thou hast assimilated even these things to thine own proper essence, as a quick fire turneth into heat and light whatsoever be cast upon it.

"As words once in use are antiquated to us, so is it with the names that were once on all men's lips: Camillus, Volesus, Leonnatus: then, in a little while, Scipio and Cato, and then Augustus, and then Hadrian, and then Antoninus Pius. How many great physicians who lifted wise brows at other men's sick-beds, have sickened and died! Those wise

Chaldeans, who foretold, as a great matter, another man's last hour, have themselves been taken by surprise. Ay! and all those others, in their pleasant places: those who doated on a Capreæ like Tiberius, on their gardens, on the baths: Pythagoras and Socrates, who reasoned so closely upon immortality: Alexander, who used the lives of others as though his own should last for ever—he and his mule-driver alike now!—one upon another. Well-nigh the whole court of Antoninus is extinct. Panthea and Pergamus sit no longer beside the sepulchre of their lord. The watchers over Hadrian's dust have slipped from his sepulchre.—It were jesting to stay longer. Did they sit there still, would the dead feel it? or feeling it, be glad? or glad, hold those watchers for ever? The time must come when they too shall be aged men and aged women, and de cease, and fail from their places; and what shift were there then for imperial service? This too is but the breath of the tomb, and a skinful of dead men's blood.

“Think again of those inscriptions, which belong not to one soul only, but to whole families: *Ἐσχάτος τοῦ ἰδίου γένους: He was the last of his race.* Nay! of the burial of whole cities: Helice, Pompeii: of others, whose very burial-place is unknown.

“Thou hast been a citizen in this wide city. Count not for how long, nor repine; since that which sends thee hence is no unrighteous judge, no tyrant, but Nature, who brought thee hither; as when a player leaves the stage at the bidding of the conductor who hired him. Sayest thou, ‘I have not played five acts’? True! but in human life, three acts only make sometimes an entire play. That is the composer's business, not thine. Withdraw thyself with a good will; for that too hath, perchance, a good will which dismisseth thee from thy part.”

The discourse ended almost in darkness, the evening having set in somewhat suddenly, with a heavy fall of snow. The torches, made ready to do him a useless honour, were of real service now, as the emperor was solemnly conducted home; one man rapidly catching light from another—a long stream of moving lights across the white Forum, up the great stairs, to the palace. And, in effect, that night winter began, the hardest that had been known for a lifetime. The wolves came from the mountains; and, led by the carrion scent, devoured the dead bodies which had been hastily buried during the plague, and, emboldened by their meal, crept, before the short day was well past, over the walls of the farmyards of the *Campagna*. The eagles were seen driving the flocks of smaller birds across the dusky sky. Only, in the city itself the winter was all the brighter for the contrast, among those who could pay for light and warmth. The habit-makers made a great sale of the spoil of all such furry creatures

as had escaped wolves and eagles, for presents at the *Saturnalia*; and at no time had the winter roses from Carthage seemed more lustrously yellow and red.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "MISTRESS AND MOTHER" OF PALACES

AFTER that sharp, brief winter, the sun was already at work, softening leaf and bud, as you might feel by a faint sweetness in the air; but he did his work behind an evenly white sky, against which the abode of the Cæsars, its cypresses and bronze roofs, seemed like a picture in beautiful but melancholy colour, as Marius climbed the long flights of steps to be introduced to the emperor Aurelius. Attired in the newest mode, his legs wound in dainty *fasciæ* of white leather, with the heavy gold ring of the *ingenuus*, and in his toga of ceremony, he still retained all his country freshness of complexion. The eyes of the "golden youth" of Rome were upon him as the chosen friend of Cornelius, and the destined servant of the emperor; but not jealously. In spite of, perhaps partly because of, his habitual reserve of manner, he had become "the fashion", even among those who felt instinctively the irony which lay beneath that remarkable self-possession, as of one taking all things with a difference from other people, perceptible in voice, in expression, and even in his dress. It was, in truth, the air of one who, entering vividly into life, and relishing to the full the delicacies of its intercourse, yet feels all the while, from the point of view of an ideal philosophy, that he is but conceding reality to suppositions, choosing of his own will to walk in a day-dream, of the illusiveness of which he at least is aware.

In the house of the chief chamberlain Marius waited for the due moment of admission to the emperor's presence. He was admiring the peculiar decoration of the walls, coloured like rich old red leather. In the midst of one of them was depicted, under a trellis of fruit you might have gathered, the figure of a woman knocking at a door with wonderful reality of perspective. Then the summons came; and in a few minutes, the etiquette of the imperial household being still a simple matter, he had passed the curtains which divided the central hall of the palace into three parts—three degrees of approach to the sacred person—and was speaking to Aurelius himself; not in Greek, in which the emperor oftenest conversed with the learned, but, more familiarly, in Latin, adorned however, or disfigured, by many a Greek phrase, as now and again French phrases have made the adornment of

fashionable English. It was with real kindness that Marcus Aurelius looked upon Marius, as a youth of great attainments in Greek letters and philosophy; and he liked also his serious expression, being, as we know, a believer in the doctrine of physiognomy—that, as he puts it, not love only, but every other affection of man's soul, looks out very plainly from the window of the eyes.

The apartment in which Marius found himself was of ancient aspect, and richly decorated with the favourite toys of two or three generations of imperial collectors, now finally revised by the high connoisseurship of the Stoic emperor himself, though destined not much longer to remain together there. It is the repeated boast of Aurelius that he had learned from old Antoninus Pius to maintain authority without the constant use of guards, in a robe woven by the handmaids of his own consort, with no processional lights or images, and “that a prince may shrink himself almost into the figure of a private gentleman”. And yet, again as at his first sight of him, Marius was struck by the profound religiousness of the surroundings of the imperial presence. The effect might have been due in part to the very simplicity, the discreet and scrupulous simplicity, of the central figure in this splendid abode; but Marius could not forget that he saw before him not only the head of the Roman religion, but one who might actually have claimed something like divine worship, had he cared to do so. Though the fantastic pretensions of Caligula had brought some contempt on that claim, which had become almost a jest under the ungainly Claudius, yet, from Augustus downwards, a vague divinity had seemed to surround the Cæsars even in this life; and the peculiar character of Aurelius, at once a ceremonious polytheist never forgetful of his pontifical calling, and a philosopher whose mystic speculation encircled him with a sort of saintly halo, had restored to his person, without his intending it, something of that divine prerogative, or prestige. Though he would never allow the immediate dedication of altars to himself, yet the image of his *Genius*—his spirituality or celestial counterpart—was placed among those of the deified princes of the past; and his family, including Faustina and the young Commodus, was spoken of as the “holy” or “divine” house. Many a Roman courtier agreed with the barbarian chief, who, after contemplating a predecessor of Aurelius, withdrew from his presence with the exclamation:—“I have seen a god to-day!” The very roof of his house, rising into a pediment or gable, like that of the sanctuary of a god, the laurels on either side its doorway, the chaplet of oak-leaves above, seemed to designate the place for religious veneration. And notwithstanding all this, the household of Aurelius was singularly modest, with none of the wasteful expense of palaces after the fashion of Lewis the Four-

teenth; the palatial dignity being felt only in a peculiar sense of order, the absence of all that was casual, of vulgarity and discomfort. A merely official residence of his predecessors, the *Palatine* had become the favourite dwelling-place of Aurelius; its many-coloured memories suiting, perhaps, his pensive character, and the crude splendours of Nero and Hadrian being now subdued by time. The window-less Roman abode must have had much of what to a modern would be gloom. How did the children, one wonders, endure houses with so little escape for the eye into the world outside? Aurelius, who had altered little else, choosing to *live* there, in a genuine homeliness, had shifted and made the most of the level lights, and broken out a quite medieval window here and there, and the clear daylight, fully appreciated by his youthful visitor, made pleasant shadows among the objects of the imperial collection. Some of these, indeed, by reason of their Greek simplicity and grace, themselves shone out like spaces of a purer, early light, amid the splendours of the Roman manufacture.

Though he looked, thought Marius, like a man who did not sleep enough, he was abounding and bright to-day, after one of those pitiless headaches, which since boyhood had been the "thorn in his side", challenging the pretensions of his philosophy to fortify one in humble endurances. At the first moment, to Marius, remembering the spectacle of the emperor in ceremony, it was almost bewildering to be in private conversation with him. There was much in the philosophy of Aurelius—much consideration of mankind at large, of great bodies, aggregates and generalities, after the Stoic manner—which, on a nature less rich than his, might have acted as an inducement to care for people in inverse proportion to their nearness to him. That has sometimes been the result of the Stoic cosmopolitanism. Aurelius, however, determined to beautify by all means, great or little, a doctrine which had in it some potential sourness, had brought all the quickness of his intelligence, and long years of observation, to bear on the conditions of social intercourse. He had early determined "not to make business an excuse to decline the offices of humanity—not to pretend to be too much occupied with important affairs to concede what life with others may hourly demand"; and with such success, that, in an age which made much of the finer points of that intercourse, it was felt that the mere honesty of his conversation was more pleasing than other men's flattery. His agreeableness to his young visitor to-day was, in truth, a blossom of the same wisdom which had made of Lucius Verus really a brother—the wisdom of not being exigent with men, any more than with fruit-trees (it is his own favourite figure) beyond their nature. And there was another person, still nearer to him, regarding whom this wisdom became a marvel, of equity—of charity.

The centre of a group of princely children, in the same apartment with Aurelius, amid all the refined intimacies of a modern home, sat the empress Faustina, warming her hands over a fire. With her long fingers lighted up red by the glowing coals of the brazier Marius looked close upon the most beautiful woman in the world, who was also the great paradox of the age, among her boys and girls. As has been truly said of the numerous representations of her in art, so in life, she had the air of one curious, restless, to enter into conversation with the first comer. She had certainly the power of stimulating a very ambiguous sort of curiosity about herself. And Marius found this enigmatic point in her expression, that even after seeing her many times he could never precisely recall her features in absence. The lad of six years, looking older, who stood beside her, impatiently plucking a rose to pieces over the hearth, was, in outward appearance, his father—the young *Verissimus*—over again; but with a certain feminine length of feature, and with all his mother's alertness, or license, of gaze.

Yet rumour knocked at every door and window of the imperial house regarding the adulterers who knocked at them, or quietly left their lovers' garlands there. Was not that likeness of the husband, in the boy beside her, really the effect of a shameful magic, in which the blood of the murdered gladiator, his true father, had been an ingredient? Were the tricks for deceiving husbands which the Roman poet describes, really hers, and her household an efficient school of all the arts of furtive love? Or, was the husband too aware, like every one beside? Were certain sudden deaths which happened there, really the work of apoplexy, or the plague?

The man whose ears, whose soul, those rumours were meant to penetrate, was, however, faithful to his sanguine and optimist philosophy, to his determination that the world should be to him simply what the higher reason preferred to conceive it; and the life's journey Aurelius had made so far, though involving much moral and intellectual loneliness, had been ever in affectionate and helpful contact with other wayfarers, very unlike himself. Since his days of earliest childhood in the Lateran gardens, he seemed to himself, blessing the gods for it after deliberate survey, to have been always surrounded by kinsmen, friends, servants, of exceptional virtue. From the great Stoic idea, that we are all fellow-citizens of one city, he had derived a tenderer, a more equitable estimate than was common among Stoics, of the eternal shortcomings of men and women. Considerations that might tend to the sweetening of his temper it was his daily care to store away, with a kind of philosophic pride in the thought that no one took more good-naturedly than he the "oversights" of his

neighbours. For had not Plato taught (it was not paradox, but simple truth of experience) that if people sin, it is because they know no better, and are "under the necessity of their own ignorance"? Hard to himself, he seemed at times, doubtless, to decline too softly upon unworthy persons. Actually, he came thereby upon many a useful instrument. The empress Faustina he would seem at least to have kept, by a constraining affection, from becoming altogether what most people have believed her, and won in her (we must take him at his word in the "Thoughts", abundantly confirmed by letters, on both sides, in his correspondence with Cornelius Fronto) a consolation, the more secure, perhaps, because misknown of others. Was the secret of her actual blamelessness, after all, with him who has at least screened her name? At all events, the one thing quite certain about her, besides her extraordinary beauty, is her sweetness to himself.

No! The wise, who had made due observation on the trees of the garden, would not expect to gather grapes of thorns or fig-trees: and he was the vine, putting forth his genial fruit, by natural law, again and again, after his kind, whatever use people might make of it. Certainly, his actual presence never lost its power, and Faustina was glad in it to-day, the birthday of one of her children, a boy who stood at her knee holding in his fingers tenderly a tiny silver trumpet, one of his birthday gifts.—"For my part, unless I conceive my hurt to be such, I have no hurt at all,"—boasts the would-be apathetic emperor:—"and how I care to conceive of the thing rests with me." Yet when his children fall sick or die, this presence breaks down, and he is broken-hearted: and one of the charms of certain of his letters still extant, is his reference to those childish sicknesses.—"On my return to Lorium," he writes, "I found my little lady—*domnulam meam*—in a fever"; and again, in a letter to one of the most serious of men, "You will be glad to hear that our little one is better, and running about the room—*parvulam nostram melius valere et intra cubiculum discurrere*."

The young Commodus had departed from the chamber, anxious to witness the exercises of certain gladiators, having a native taste for such company, inherited, according to popular rumour, from his true father—anxious also to escape from the too impressive company of the gravest and sweetest specimen of old age Marius had ever seen, the tutor of the imperial children, who had arrived to offer his birthday congratulations, and now, very familiarly and affectionately, made a part of the group, falling on the shoulders of the emperor, kissing the empress Faustina on the face, the little ones on the face and hands. Marcus Cornelius Fronto, the "Orator", favourite teacher of the emperor's youth, afterwards his most trusted counsellor, and now the

undisputed occupant of the sophistic throne, whose equipage, elegantly mounted with silver, Marius had seen in the streets of Rome, had certainly turned his many personal gifts to account with a good fortune, remarkable even in that age, so indulgent to professors or rhetoricians. The gratitude of the emperor Aurelius, always generous to his teachers, arranging their very quarrels sometimes, for they were not always fair to one another, had helped him to a really great place in the world. But his sumptuous appendages, including the villa and gardens of Mæcenas, had been borne with an air perfectly becoming, by the professor of a philosophy which, even in its most accomplished and elegant phase, pre-supposed a gentle contempt for such things. With an intimate practical knowledge of manners, physiognomies, smiles, disguises, flatteries, and courtly tricks of every kind—a whole accomplished rhetoric of daily life—he applied them all to the promotion of humanity, and especially of men's family affection. Through a long life of now eighty years, he had been, as it were, surrounded by the gracious and soothing air of his own eloquence—the fame, the echoes, of it—like warbling birds, or murmuring bees. Setting forth in that fine medium the best ideas of matured pagan philosophy, he had become the favourite “director” of noble youth.

Yes! it was the one instance Marius, always eagerly on the look-out for such, had yet seen of a perfectly tolerable, perfectly beautiful, old age—an old age in which there seemed, to one who perhaps habitually over-valued the expression of youth, nothing to be regretted, nothing really lost, in what years had taken away. The wise old man, whose blue eyes and fair skin were so delicate, uncontaminate and clear, would seem to have replaced carefully and consciously each natural trait of youth, as it departed from him, by an equivalent grace of culture; and had the blitheness, the placid cheerfulness, as he had also the infirmity, the claim on stronger people, of a delightful child. And yet he seemed to be but awaiting his exit from life—that moment with which the Stoics were almost as much preoccupied as the Christians, however differently—and set Marius pondering on the contrast between a placidity like this, at eighty years, and the sort of desperation he was aware of in his own manner of entertaining that thought. His infirmities nevertheless had been painful and long-continued, with losses of children, of pet grandchildren. What with the crowd, and the wretched streets, it was a sign of affection which had cost him something, for the old man to leave his own house at all that day; and he was glad of the emperor's support, as he moved from place to place among the children he protests so often to have loved as his own.

For a strange piece of literary good fortune, at the beginning of the

present century, had set free the long-buried fragrance of this famous friendship of the old world, from below a valueless later manuscript, in a series of letters, wherein the two writers exchange, for the most part their evening thoughts, especially at family anniversaries, and with entire intimacy, on their children, on the art of speech, on all the various subtleties of the "science of images"—rhetorical images—above all, of course, on sleep and matters of health. They are full of mutual admiration of each other's eloquence, restless in absence till they see one another again, noting, characteristically, their very dreams of each other, expecting the day which will terminate the office, the business of duty, which separates them—"as superstitious people watch for the star, at the rising of which they may break their fast". To one of the writers, to Aurelius, the correspondence was sincerely of value. We see him once reading his letters with genuine delight on going to rest. Fronto seeks to deter his pupil from writing in Greek.—Why buy, at great cost, a foreign wine, inferior to that from one's own vineyard? Aurelius, on the other hand, with an extraordinary innate susceptibility to words—*la parole pour la parole*, as the French say—despairs, in presence of Fronto's rhetorical perfection.

Like the modern visitor to the Capitoline and some other museums, Fronto had been struck, pleasantly struck, by the family likeness among the Antonines; and it was part of his friendship to make much of it, in the case of the children of Faustina. "Well! I have seen the little ones," he writes to Aurelius, then, apparently, absent from them: "I have seen the little ones—the pleasantest sight of my life; for they are as like yourself as could possibly be. It has well repaid me for my journey over that slippery road, and up those steep rocks; for I beheld you, not simply face to face before me, but, more generously, whichever way I turned, to my right and my left. For the rest, I found them, Heaven be thanked! with healthy cheeks and lusty voices. One was holding a slice of white bread, like a king's son; the other a crust of brown bread, as becomes the offspring of a philosopher. I pray the gods to have both the sower and the seed in their keeping; to watch over this field wherein the ears of corn are so kindly alike. Ah! I heard too their pretty voices, so sweet that in the childish prattle of one and the other I seemed somehow to be listening—yes! in that chirping of your pretty chickens—to the limpid and harmonious notes of your own oratory. Take care! you will find me growing independent, having those I could love in your place:—love, on the surety of my eyes and ears."

"*Magistro meo salutem!*" replied the emperor. "I too have seen my little ones in your sight of them; as, also, I saw yourself in reading your letter. It is that charming letter forces me to write thus": with

reiterations of affection, that is, which are continual in these letters, on both sides, and which may strike a modern reader perhaps as fulsome; or, again, as having something in common with the old Judaic unction of friendship. They were certainly sincere.

To one of those children Fronto had now brought the birthday gift of the silver trumpet, upon which he ventured to blow softly now and again, turning away with eyes delighted at the sound, when he thought the old man was not listening. It was the well-worn, valetudinarian subject of sleep, on which Fronto and Aurelius were talking together; Aurelius always feeling it a burden, Fronto a thing of magic capacities, so that he had written an *encomium* in its praise, and often by ingenious arguments recommends his imperial pupil not to be sparing of it. To-day, with his younger listeners in mind, he had a story to tell about it:—

“They say that our father Jupiter, when he ordered the world at the beginning, divided time into two parts exactly equal: the one part he clothed with light, the other with darkness: he called them Day and Night; and he assigned rest to the night and to day the work of life. At that time Sleep was not yet born and men passed the whole of their lives awake: only, the quiet of the night was ordained for them, instead of sleep. But it came to pass, little by little, being that the minds of men are restless, that they carried on their business alike by night as by day, and gave no part at all to repose. And Jupiter, when he perceived that even in the night-time they ceased not from trouble and disputation, and that even the courts of law remained open (it was the pride of Aurelius, as Fronto knew, to be assiduous in those courts till far into the night) resolved to appoint one of his brothers to be the overseer of the night and have authority over man’s rest. But Neptune pleaded in excuse the gravity of his constant charge of the seas, and Father Dis the difficulty of keeping in subjection the spirits below; and Jupiter, having taken counsel with the other gods, perceived that the practice of nightly vigils was somewhat in favour. It was then, for the most part, that Juno gave birth to her children: Minerva, the mistress of all art and craft, loved the midnight lamp: Mars delighted in the darkness for his plots and sallies; and the favour of Venus and Bacchus was with those who roused by night. Then it was that Jupiter formed the design of creating Sleep; and he added him to the number of the gods, and gave him the charge over night and rest, putting into his hands the keys of human eyes. With his own hands he mingled the juices wherewith Sleep should soothe the hearts of mortals—herb of Enjoyment and herb of Safety, gathered from a grove in Heaven; and, from the meadows of Acheron, the herb of Death; expressing from it one single drop only, no bigger than a

tear one might hide. 'With this juice,' he said, 'pour slumber upon the eyelids of mortals. So soon as it hath touched them they will lay themselves down motionless, under thy power. But be not afraid: they shall revive, and in a while stand up again upon their feet.' Thereafter, Jupiter gave wings to Sleep, attached, not, like Mercury's, to his heels, but to his shoulders, like the wings of Love. For he said, 'It becomes thee not to approach men's eyes as with the noise of chariots, and the rushing of a swift courser, but in placid and merciful flight, as upon the wings of a swallow—nay! with not so much as the flutter of the dove.' Besides all this, that he might be yet pleasanter to men, he committed to him also a multitude of blissful dreams, according to every man's desire. One watched his favourite actor; another listened to the flute, or guided a charioteer in the race: in his dream, the soldier was victorious, the general was borne in triumph, the wanderer returned home. Yes!—and sometimes those dreams come true!"

Just then Aurelius was summoned to make the birthday offerings to his household gods. A heavy curtain of tapestry was drawn back; and beyond it Marius gazed for a few moments into the *Lararium*, or imperial chapel. A patrician youth, in white habit, was in waiting, with a little chest in his hand containing incense for the use of the altar. On richly carved *consoles*, or side boards, around this narrow chamber, were arranged the rich apparatus of worship and the golden or gilded images, adorned to-day with fresh flowers, among them that image of Fortune from the apartment of Antoninus Pius, and such of the emperor's own teachers as were gone to their rest. A dim fresco on the wall commemorated the ancient piety of Lucius Albinus, who in flight from Rome on the morrow of a great disaster, overtaking certain priests on foot with their sacred utensils, descended from the wagon in which he rode and yielded it to the ministers of the gods. As he ascended into the chapel the emperor paused, and with a grave but friendly look at his young visitor, delivered a parting sentence, audible to him alone: *Imitation is the most acceptable part of worship: the gods had much rather mankind should resemble than flatter them:—Make sure that those to whom you come nearest be the happier by your presence!*

It was the very spirit of the scene and the hour—the hour Marius had spent in the imperial house. How temperate, how tranquillising! what humanity! Yet, as he left the eminent company concerning whose ways of life at home he had been so youthfully curious, and sought, after his manner, to determine the main trait in all this, he had to confess that it was a sentiment of mediocrity, though of a mediocrity for once really golden.

CHAPTER XIV

MANLY AMUSEMENT

DURING the Eastern war there came a moment when schism in the empire had seemed possible through the defection of Lucius Verus; when to Aurelius it had also seemed possible to confirm his allegiance by no less a gift than his beautiful daughter Lucilla, the eldest of his children—the *dommula*, probably, of those letters. The *little lady*, grown now to strong and stately maidenhood, had been ever something of the good genius, the better soul, to Lucius Verus, by the law of contraries, her somewhat cold and apathetic modesty acting as counterfoil to the young man's tigrish fervour. Conducted to Ephesus, she had become his wife by form of civil marriage, the more solemn wedding rites being deferred till their return to Rome.

The ceremony of the *Confarreatio*, or religious marriage, in which bride and bridegroom partook together of a certain mystic bread, was celebrated accordingly, with due pomp, early in the spring; Aurelius himself assisting, with much domestic feeling. A crowd of fashionable people filled the space before the entrance to the apartments of Lucius on the Palatine hill, richly decorated for the occasion, commenting, not always quite delicately, on the various details of the rite, which only a favoured few succeeded in actually witnessing. "She comes!" Marius could hear them say, "escorted by her young brothers: it is the young Commodus who carries the torch of white-thorn-wood, the little basket of work-things, the toys for the children":—and then, after a watchful pause, "she is winding the woollen thread round the doorposts. Ah! I see the marriage-cake: the bridegroom presents the fire and water." Then, in a longer pause, was heard the chorus, *Thalassie! Thalassie!* and for just a few moments, in the strange light of many wax tapers at noonday, Marius could see them both, side by side, while the bride was lifted over the doorstep: Lucius Verus heated and handsome—the pale, impassive Lucilla looking very long and slender, in her closely folded yellow veil, and high nuptial crown.

As Marius turned away, glad to escape from the pressure of the crowd, he found himself face to face with Cornelius, an infrequent spectator on occasions such as this. It was a relief to depart with him—so fresh and quiet he looked, though in all his splendid equestrian array in honour of the ceremony—from the garish heat of the marriage scene. The reserve which had puzzled Marius so much on his first day in Rome, was but an instance of many, to him wholly unaccountable, avoidances alike of things and persons, which must certainly mean that

an intimate companionship would cost him something in the way of seemingly indifferent amusements. Some inward standard Marius seemed to detect there (though wholly unable to estimate its nature) of distinction, selection, refusal, amid the various elements of the fervid and corrupt life across which they were 'moving together:—some secret, constraining motive, ever on the alert at eye and ear, which carried him through Rome as under a charm, so that Marius could not but think of that figure of the white bird in the market-place as undoubtedly made true of him. And Marius was still full of admiration for this companion, who had known how to make himself very pleasant to him. Here was the clear, cold corrective, which the fever of his present life demanded. Without it, he would have felt alternately suffocated and exhausted by an existence, at once so gaudy and overdone, and yet so intolerably empty; in which people, even at their best, seemed only to be brooding, like the wise emperor himself, over a world's disillusion. For with all the severity of Cornelius, there was such a breeze of hopefulness—freshness and hopefulness, as of new morning, about him. For the most part, as I said, those refusals, that reserve of his, seemed unaccountable. But there were cases where the unknown monitor acted in a direction with which the judgment, or instinct, of Marius himself wholly concurred; the effective decision of Cornelius strengthening him further therein, as by a kind of outwardly embodied conscience. And the entire drift of his education determined him, on one point at least, to be wholly of the same mind with this peculiar friend (they two, it might be, together, against the world!) when, alone of a whole company of brilliant youth, he had withdrawn from his appointed place in the amphitheatre, at a grand public show, which after an interval of many months, was presented there, in honour of the nuptials of Lucius Verus and Lucilla.

And it was still to the eye, through visible movement and aspect, that the character, or genius of Cornelius made itself felt by Marius; even as on that afternoon when he had girt on his armour, among the expressive lights and shades of the dim old villa at the roadside, and every object of his knightly array had seemed to be but sign or symbol of some other thing far beyond it. For, consistently with his really poetic temper, all influence reached Marius, even more exclusively than he was aware, through the medium of sense. From Flavian, in that brief early summer of his existence, he had derived a powerful impression of the "perpetual flux": he had caught there, as in cipher or symbol, or low whispers more effective than any definite language, his own Cyrenaic philosophy, presented thus, for the first time, in an image or person, with much attractiveness, touched also, consequently, with a pathetic sense of personal sorrow:—a concrete image, the

abstract equivalent of which he could recognise afterwards, when the agitating personal influence had settled down for him, clearly enough, into a theory of practice. But of what possible intellectual formula could this mystic Cornelius be the sensible exponent; seeming, as he did, to live ever in close relationship with, and recognition of, a mental view, a source of discernment, a light upon his way, which had certainly not yet sprung up for Marius? Meantime, the discretion of Cornelius, his energetic clearness and purity, were a charm, rather physical than moral: his exquisite correctness of spirit, at all events, accorded so perfectly with the regular beauty of his person, as to seem to depend upon it. And wholly different as was this later friendship, with its exigency, its warnings, its restraints, from the feverish attachment to Flavian, which had made him at times like an uneasy slave, still, like that, it was a reconciliation to the world of sense, the visible world. From the hopefulness of this gracious presence, all visible things around him, even the commonest objects of everyday life—if they but stood together to warm their hands at the same fire—took for him a new poetry, a delicate fresh bloom, and interest. It was as if his bodily eyes had been indeed mystically washed, renewed, strengthened.

And how eagerly, with what a light heart, would Flavian have taken his place in the amphitheatre, among the youth of his own age! with what an appetite for every detail of the entertainment, and its various accessories:—the sunshine, filtered into soft gold by the *væla*, with their serpentine patterning, spread over the more select part of the company; the Vestal virgins, taking their privilege of seats near the empress Faustina, who sat there in a maze of double-coloured gems, changing, as she moved, like the waves of the sea; the cool circle of shadow, in which the wonderful toilets of the fashionable told so effectively around the blazing arena, covered again and again during the many hours' show, with clean sand for the absorption of certain great red patches there, by troops of white-shirted boys, for whom the good-natured audience provided a scramble of nuts and small coin, flung to them over a trellis-work of silver-gilt and amber, precious gift of Nero, while a rain of flowers and perfume fell over themselves, as they paused between the parts of their long feast upon the spectacle of animal suffering.

During his sojourn at Ephesus, Lucius Verus had readily become a patron, patron or *protégé*, of the great goddess of Ephesus, the goddess of hunters; and the show, celebrated by way of a compliment to him to-day, was to present some incidents of her story, where she figures almost as the genius of madness, in animals, or in the humanity which comes in contact with them. The entertainment would have an

an element of old Greek revival in it, welcome to the taste of a learned and Hellenising society; and, as Lucius Verus was in some sense a lover of animals, was to be a display of animals mainly. There would be real wild and domestic creatures, all of rare species; and a real slaughter. On so happy an occasion, it was hoped, the elder emperor might even concede a point, and a living criminal fall into the jaws of the wild beasts. And the spectacle was, certainly, to end in the destruction, by one mighty shower of arrows, of a hundred lions, "nobly" provided by Aurelius himself for the amusement of his people.—*Tam magnanimus fuit!*

The arena, decked and in order for the first scene, looked delightfully fresh, re-inforcing on the spirits of the audience the actual freshness of the morning, which at this season still brought the dew. Along the subterranean ways that led up to it, the sound of an advancing chorus was heard at last, chanting the words of a sacred song, or hymn to Diana; for the spectacle of the amphitheatre was, after all, a religious occasion. To its grim acts of bloodshedding a kind of sacrificial character still belonged in the view of certain religious casuists, tending conveniently to soothe the humane sensibilities of so pious an emperor as Aurelius, who, in his fraternal complacency, had consented to preside over the shows.

Artemis or Diana, as she may be understood in the actual development of her worship, was, indeed, the symbolical expression of two allied yet contrasted elements of human temper and experience—man's amity, and also his enmity, towards the wild creatures, when they were still, in a certain sense, his brothers. She is the complete, and therefore highly complex, representative of a state, in which man was still much occupied with animals, not as his flock, or as his servants after the pastoral relationship of our later, orderly world, but rather as his equals, on friendly terms or the reverse,—a state full of primeval sympathies and antipathies, of rivalries and common wants—while he watched, and could enter into, the humours of those "younger brothers", with an intimacy, the "survivals" of which in a later age seem often to have had a kind of madness about them. Diana represents alike the bright and the dark side of such relationship. But the humanities of that relationship were all forgotten to-day in the excitement of a show, in which mere cruelty to animals, their useless suffering and death, formed the main point of interest. People watched their destruction, batch after batch, in a not particularly inventive fashion; though it was expected that the animals themselves, as living creatures are apt to do when hard put to it, would become inventive, and make up, by the fantastic accidents of their agony, for the deficiencies of an age fallen behind in this matter of manly amusement.

It was as a Deity of Slaughter—the Taurian goddess who demands the sacrifice of the shipwrecked sailors thrown on her coasts—the cruel, moonstruck huntress, who brings not only sudden death, but *rabies*, among the wild creatures that Diana was to be presented, in the person of a famous courtesan. The aim at an actual theatrical illusion, after the first introductory scene, was frankly surrendered to the display of the animals, artificially stimulated and maddened to attack each other. And as Diana was also a special protectress of new-born creatures, there would be a certain curious interest in the dexterously contrived escape of the young from their mothers' torn bosoms; as many pregnant animals as possible being carefully selected for the purpose.

The time had been, and was to come again, when the pleasures of the amphitheatre centred in a similar practical joking upon human beings. What more ingenious diversion had stage manager ever contrived than that incident, itself a practical epigram never to be forgotten, when a criminal, who, like slaves and animals, had no rights, was compelled to present the part of Icarus; and, the wings failing him in due course, had fallen into a pack of hungry bears? For the long shows of the amphitheatre were, so to speak, the novel-reading of that age—a current help provided for sluggish imaginations, in regard, for instance, to grisly accidents, such as might happen to one's self; but with every facility for comfortable inspection. Scævola might watch his own hand, consuming, crackling, in the fire, in the person of a culprit, willing to redeem his life by an act so delightful to the eyes, the very ears, of a curious public. If the part of Marsyas was called for, there was a criminal condemned to lose his skin. It might be almost edifying to study minutely the expression of his face, while the assistants corded and pegged him to the bench, cunningly; the servant of the law waiting by, who, after one short cut with his knife, would slip the man's leg from his skin, as neatly as if it were a stocking—a *finesse* in providing the due amount of suffering for wrong-doers only brought to its height in Nero's living bonfires. But then, by making his suffering ridiculous, you enlist against the sufferer, some real, and all would-be manliness, and do much to stifle any false sentiment of compassion. The philosophic emperor, having no great taste for sport, and asserting here a personal scruple, had greatly changed all that; had provided that nets should be spread under the dancers on the tight-rope, and buttons for the swords of the gladiators. But the gladiators were still there. Their bloody contests had, under the form of a popular amusement, the efficacy of a human sacrifice; as, indeed, the whole system of the public shows was understood to possess a religious import. Just at this point, certainly,

the judgment of Lucretius on pagan religion is without reproach—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

And Marius, weary and indignant, feeling isolated in the great slaughter-house, could not but observe that, in his habitual complaisance to Lucius Verus who, with loud shouts of applause from time to time, lounged beside him, Aurelius had sat impassively through all the hours Marius himself had remained there. For the most part, indeed, the emperor had actually averted his eyes from the show, reading, or writing on matters of public business, but had seemed, after all, indifferent. He was revolving, perhaps, that old Stoic paradox of the *Imperceptibility of pain*; which might serve as an excuse, should those savage popular humours ever again turn against men and women. Marius remembered well his very attitude and expression on this day, when, a few years later, certain things came to pass in Gaul, under his full authority; and that attitude and expression defined already, even thus early in their so friendly intercourse, and though he was still full of gratitude for his interest, a permanent point of difference between the emperor and himself—between himself, with all the convictions of his life taking centre to-day in his merciful, angry heart, and Aurelius, as representing all the light, all the apprehensive power there might be in pagan intellect. There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness; to set them on opposite sides, in some great conflict, of which that difference was but a single presentment. Due, in whatever proportions, to the abstract principles he had formulated for himself, or in spite of them, there was the loyal conscience within him, deciding, judging himself and every one else, with a wonderful sort of authority:—You ought, methinks, to be something quite different from what you are; here! and here! Surely Aurelius must be lacking in that decisive conscience at first sight, of the intimations of which Marius could entertain no doubt—which he looked for in others. He at least, the humble follower of the bodily eye, was aware of a crisis in life, in this brief, obscure existence, a fierce opposition of real good and real evil around him, the issues of which he must by no means compromise or confuse; of the antagonisms of which the “wise” Marcus Aurelius was unaware.

That long chapter of the cruelty of the Roman public shows may, perhaps, leave with the children of the modern world a feeling of self-complacency. Yet it might seem well to ask ourselves—it is always well to do so, when we read of the slave-trade, for instance, or of

great religious persecutions on this side or on that, or of anything else which raises in us the question, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"—not merely, what germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like; but, even more practically, what thoughts, what sort of considerations, may be actually present to our minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them: each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin—the touch-stone of an unfailing conscience in the select few.

Those cruel amusements were, certainly, the sin of blindness, of deadness and stupidity, in the age of Marius; and his light had not failed him regarding it. Yes! what was needed was the heart that would make it impossible to witness all this; and the future would be with the forces that could beget a heart like that. His chosen philosophy had said,—Trust the eye: Strive to be right always in regard to the concrete experience: Beware of falsifying your impressions. And its sanction had at least been effective here, in protesting—"This, and this, is what you may not look upon!"—Surely evil was a real thing, and the wise man wanting in the sense of it, where, not to have been, by instinctive election, on the right side, was to have failed in life.

PART THE THIRD

CHAPTER XV

STOICISM AT COURT

THE very finest flower of the same company—Aurelius with the gilded *fascēs* borne before him, a crowd of exquisites, the empress Faustina herself, and all the elegant blue-stockings of the day, who maintained, people said, their private “sophists” to whisper philosophy into their ears winsomely as they performed the duties of the toilet—was assembled again a few months later, in a different place and for a very different purpose. The temple of Peace, a “modernising” foundation of Hadrian, enlarged by a library and lecture-rooms, had grown into an institution like something between a college and a literary club; and here Cornelius Fronto was to pronounce a discourse on the *Nature of Morals*. There were some, indeed, who had desired the emperor Aurelius himself to declare his whole mind on this matter. Rhetoric was become almost a function of the state: philosophy was upon the throne; and had from time to time, by request, delivered an official utterance with well-nigh divine authority. And it was as the delegate of this authority, under the full sanction of the philosophic emperor—emperor and pontiff, that the aged Fronto purposed to-day to expound some parts of the Stoic doctrine, with the view of recommending morals to that refined but perhaps prejudiced company, as being, in effect, one mode of comeliness in things—as it were music, or a kind of artistic order, in life. And he did this earnestly, with an outlay of all his science of mind, and that eloquence of which he was known to be a master. For Stoicism was no longer a rude and unkempt thing. Received at court, it had largely decorated itself: it was grown persuasive and insinuating, and sought not only to convince men’s intelligence but to allure their souls. Associated with the beautiful old age of the great rhetorician, and his winning voice, it was almost Epicurean. And the old man was at his best on the occasion; the last on which he ever appeared in this way. To-day was his own birthday. Early in the morning the imperial letter of congratulation had reached him; and all the pleasant animation it had caused was in his face, when assisted by his daughter Gratia he took his place on the ivory chair, as president of the *Athenaeum* of Rome, wearing with a wonderful grace the philosophic pall,—in reality neither more nor less than the loose woollen cloak of the common

soldier, but fastened on his right shoulder with a magnificent clasp, the emperor's birthday gift.

It was an age, as abundant evidence shows, whose delight in rhetoric was but one result of a general susceptibility—an age not merely taking pleasure in words, but experiencing a great moral power in them. Fronto's quaintly fashionable audience would have wept, and also assisted with their purses, had his present purpose been, as sometimes happened, the recommendation of an object of charity. As it was, arranging themselves at their ease among the images and flowers, these amateurs of exquisite language, with their tablets open for careful record of felicitous word or phrase, were ready to give themselves wholly to the intellectual treat prepared for them, applauding, blowing loud kisses through the air sometimes, at the speaker's triumphant exit from one of his long, skilfully modulated sentences; while the younger of them meant to imitate everything about him, down to the inflections of his voice and the very folds of his mantle. Certainly there was rhetoric enough:—a wealth of imagery; illustrations from painting, music, mythology, the experiences of love; a management, by which subtle, unexpected meaning was brought out of familiar terms, like flies from morsels of amber, to use Fronto's own figure. But with all its richness, the higher claim of his style was rightly understood to lie in gravity and self-command, and an especial care for the purities of a vocabulary which rejected every expression unsanctioned by the authority of approved ancient models.

And it happened with Marius, as it will sometimes happen, that this general discourse to a general audience had the effect of an utterance adroitly designed for him. His conscience still vibrating painfully under the shock of that scene in the amphitheatre, and full of the ethical charm of Cornelius, he was questioning himself with much impatience as to the possibility of an adjustment between his own elaborately thought-out intellectual scheme and the "old morality". In that intellectual scheme indeed the old morality had so far been allowed no place, as seeming to demand from him the admission of certain first principles such as might misdirect or retard him in his efforts towards a complete, many-sided existence; or distort the revelations of the experience of life; or curtail his natural liberty of heart and mind. But now (his imagination being occupied for the moment with the noble and resolute air, the gallantry, so to call it, which composed the outward mien and presentment of his strange friend's inflexible ethics) he felt already some nascent suspicion of his philosophic programme, in regard, precisely, to the question of good taste. There was the taint of a graceless "antinomianism" perceptible in it, a dissidence, a revolt against accustomed modes, the actual

impression of which on other men might rebound upon himself in some loss of that personal pride to which it was part of his theory of life to allow so much. And it was exactly a moral situation such as this that Fronto appeared to be contemplating. He seemed to have before his mind the case of one—Cyrenaic or Epicurean, as the courtier tends to be, by habit and instinct, if not on principle—who yet experiences, actually, a strong tendency to moral assents, and a desire, with as little logical inconsistency as may be, to find a place for duty and righteousness in his house of thought.

And the Stoic professor found the key to this problem in the purely æsthetic beauty of the old morality, as an element in things, fascinating to the imagination, to good taste in its most highly developed form, through association—a system or order, as a matter of fact, in possession, not only of the larger world, but of the rare minority of *élite* intelligences; from which, therefore, least of all would the sort of Epicurean he had in view endure to become, so to speak, an outlaw. He supposed his hearer to be, with all sincerity, in search after some principle of conduct (and it was here that he seemed to Marius to be speaking straight to him) which might give unity of motive to an actual rectitude, a cleanness and probity of life, determined partly by natural affection, partly by enlightened self-interest or the feeling of honour, due in part even to the mere fear of penalties; no element of which, however, was distinctively moral in the agent himself as such, and providing him, therefore, no common ground with a really moral being like Cornelius, or even like the philosophic emperor. Performing the same offices; actually satisfying, even as they, the external claims of others; rendering to all their dues—one thus circumstanced would be wanting, nevertheless, in the secret of inward adjustment to the moral agents around him. How tenderly—more tenderly than many stricter souls—he might yield himself to kindly instinct! what fineness of charity in passing judgment on others! what an exquisite conscience of other men's susceptibilities! He knows for how much the manner, because the heart itself, counts, in doing a kindness. He goes beyond most people in his care for all weakly creatures; judging, instinctively, that to be but sentient is to possess rights. He conceives a hundred duties, though he may not call them by that name, of the existence of which purely piteous souls may have no suspicion. He has a kind of pride in doing more than they, in a way of his own. Sometimes, he may think that those men of line and rule do not really understand their own business. How narrow, inflexible, unintelligent! what poor guardians (he may reason) of the inward spirit of righteousness, are some supposed careful walkers according to its letter and form. And yet all the while he

admits, as such, no moral world at all: no theoretic equivalent to so large a proportion of the facts of life.

But, over and above such practical rectitude, thus determined by natural affection or self-love or fear, he may notice that there is a remnant of right conduct, what he does, still more what he abstains from doing, not so much through his own free election, as from a deference, an "assent", entire, habitual, unconscious, to custom—to the actual habit or fashion of others, from whom he could not endure to break away, any more than he would care to be out of agreement with them on questions of mere manner, or, say, even, of dress. Yes! there were the evils, the vices, which he avoided as, essentially, a failure in good taste. An assent, such as this, to the preferences of others, might seem to be the weakest of motives, and the rectitude it could determine the least considerable element in a moral life. Yet here, according to Cornelius Fronto, was in truth the revealing example, albeit operating upon comparative trifles, of the general principle required. There was one great idea associated with which that determination to conform to precedent was elevated into the clearest, the fullest, the weightiest principle of moral action; a principle under which one might subsume men's most strenuous efforts after righteousness. And he proceeded to expound the idea of Humanity—of a universal commonwealth of mind, which becomes explicit, and as if incarnate, in a select communion of just men made perfect.

‘Ο κόσμος ὥσπερ πόλις ἔστιν—the world is as it were a commonwealth, a city: and there are observances, customs, usages, actually current in it, things our friends and companions will expect of us, as the condition of our living there with them at all, as really their peers or fellow-citizens. Those observances were, indeed, the creation of a visible or invisible aristocracy in it, whose actual manners, whose preferences from of old, become now a weighty tradition as to the way in which things should or should not be done, are like a music, to which the intercourse of life proceeds—such a music as no one who had once caught its harmonies would willingly jar. In this way, the *becoming*, as in Greek—τὸ πρέπον: or τὰ ἥθη, *mores*, *manners*, as both Greeks and Romans said, would indeed be a comprehensive term for duty. Righteousness would be, in the words of "Cæsar" himself, of the philosophic Aurelius, but a "following of the reasonable will of the oldest, the most venerable, of cities, of politics—of the royal, the law-giving element, therein—forasmuch as we are citizens also in that supreme city on high, of which all other cities beside are but as single habitations." But as the old man spoke with animation of this supreme city, this invisible society, whose conscience was become explicit in its inner circle of inspired souls, of whose common spirit, the trusted

leaders of human conscience had been but the mouthpiece, of whose successive personal preferences in the conduct of life, the "old morality" was the sum,—Marius felt that his own thoughts were passing beyond the actual intention of the speaker; not in the direction of any clearer theoretic or abstract definition of that ideal commonwealth, but rather as if in search of its visible locality and abiding-place, the walls and towers of which, so to speak, he might really trace and tell, according to his own old, natural habit of mind. It would be the fabric, the outward fabric, of a system reaching, certainly, far beyond the great city around him, even if conceived in all the machinery of its visible and invisible influences at their grandest—as Augustus or Trajan might have conceived of them—however well the visible Rome might pass for a figure of that new, unseen, Rome on high. At moments, Marius even asked himself with surprise, whether it might be some vast secret society, the speaker had in view:—that august community, to be an outlaw from which, to be foreign to the manners of which, was a loss so much greater than to be excluded, into the ends of the earth, from the sovereign Roman commonwealth. Humanity, a universal order, the great polity, its aristocracy of elect spirits, the mastery of their example over their successors—these were the ideas, stimulating enough in their way, by association with which the Stoic professor had attempted to elevate, to unite under a single principle, men's moral efforts, himself lifted up with so genuine an enthusiasm. But where might Marius search for all this, as more than an intellectual abstraction? Where were those elect souls in whom the claim of Humanity became so amiable, winning, persuasive—whose footsteps through the world were so beautiful in the actual order he saw—whose faces averted from him, would be more than he could bear? Where was that comely order, to which as a great fact of experience he must give its due; to which, as to all other beautiful "phenomena" in life, he must, for his own peace, adjust himself?

Rome did well to be serious. The discourse ended somewhat abruptly, as the noise of a great crowd in motion was heard below the walls; whereupon, the audience, following the humour of the younger element in it, poured into the colonnade, from the steps of which the famous procession, or *transvectio*, of the military knights was to be seen passing over the Forum, from their trysting-place at the temple of Mars, to the temple of the Dioscuri. The ceremony took place this year, not on the day accustomed—anniversary of the victory of Lake Regillus, with its pair of celestial assistants—and amid the heat and roses of a Roman July, but, by anticipation, some months

earlier, the almond-trees along the way being still in leafless flower. Through the light trellis-work, Marius watched the riders, arrayed in all their gleaming ornaments, and wearing wreaths of olive around their helmets, the faces below which, what with battle and the plague were almost all youthful. It was a flowery scene enough, but had to-day its fulness of warlike meaning; the return of the army to the North, where the enemy was again upon the move, being now imminent. Cornelius had ridden along in his place, and, on the dismissal of the company, passed below the steps where Marius stood, with that new song he had heard once before floating from his lips.

CHAPTER XVI

SECOND THOUGHTS

AND Marius, for his part, was grave enough. The discourse of Cornelius Fronto, with its wide prospect over the human, the spiritual, horizon, had set him on a review—on a review of the isolating narrowness, in particular, of his own theoretic scheme. Long after the very latest roses were faded, when “the town” had departed to country villas, or the baths, or the war, he remained behind in Rome; anxious to try the lastingness of his own Epicurean rose-garden; setting to work over again, and deliberately passing from point to point of his old argument with himself, down to its practical conclusions. That age and our own have much in common—many difficulties and hopes. Let the reader pardon me if here and there I seem to be passing from Marius to his modern representatives—from Rome, to Paris or London.

What really were its claims as a theory of practice, of the sympathies that determine practice? It had been a theory, avowedly, of loss and gain (so to call it) of an economy. If, therefore, it missed something in the commerce of life, which some other theory of practice was able to include, if it made a needless sacrifice, then it must be, in a manner, inconsistent with itself, and lack theoretic completeness. Did it make such a sacrifice? What did it lose, or cause one to lose?

And we may note, as Marius could hardly have done, that Cyrenaicism is ever the characteristic philosophy of youth, ardent, but narrow in its survey—sincere, but apt to become one-sided, or even fanatical. It is one of those subjective and partial ideals, based on vivid, because limited, apprehension of the truth of one aspect of experience (in this case, of the beauty of the world and the brevity of man’s life there) which it may be said to be the special vocation of the young to express.

In the school of Cyrene, in that comparatively fresh Greek world, we see this philosophy where it is least *blasé*, as we say; in its most pleasant, its blithest and yet perhaps its wisest form, youthfully bright in the youth of European thought. But it grows young again for a while in almost every youthful soul. It is spoken of sometimes as the appropriate utterance of jaded men; but in them it can hardly be sincere, or, by the nature of the case, an enthusiasm. "Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes," is, indeed, most often, according to the supposition of the book from which I quote it, the counsel of the young, who feel that the sunshine is pleasant along their veins, and wintry weather, though in a general sense foreseen, a long way off. The youthful enthusiasm or fanaticism, the self-abandonment to one favourite mode of thought or taste, which occurs, quite naturally, at the outset of every really vigorous intellectual career, finds its special opportunity in a theory such as that so carefully put together by Marius, just because it seems to call on one to make the sacrifice, accompanied by a vivid sensation of power and will, of what others value—sacrifice of some conviction, or doctrine, or supposed first principle—for the sake of that clear-eyed intellectual consistency, which is like spotless bodily cleanliness, or scrupulous personal honour, and has itself for the mind of the youthful student, when he first comes to appreciate it, the fascination of an ideal.

The Cyrenaic doctrine, then, realised as a motive of strenuousness or enthusiasm, is not so properly the utterance of the "jaded Epicurean", as of the strong young man in all the freshness of thought and feeling, fascinated by the notion of raising his life to the level of a daring theory, while, in the first genial heat of existence, the beauty of the physical world strikes potently upon his wide-open, unwearied senses. He discovers a great new poem every spring, with a hundred delightful things he too has felt, but which have never been expressed, or at least never so truly, before. The workshops of the artists, who can select and set before us what is really most distinguished in visible life, are open to him. He thinks that the old Platonic, or the new Baconian philosophy, has been better explained than by the authors themselves, or with some striking original development, this very month. In the quiet heat of early summer, on the dusty gold morning, the music comes, louder at intervals, above the hum of voices from some neighbouring church, among the flowering trees, valued now, perhaps, only for the poetically rapt faces among priests or worshippers, or the mere skill and eloquence, it may be, of its preachers of faith and righteousness. In his scrupulous idealism, indeed, he too feels himself to be something of a priest, and that devotion of his days to the contemplation of what is beautiful, a sort of perpetual religious

service. Afar off, how many fair cities and delicate sea-coasts await him! At that age, with minds of a certain constitution, no very choice or exceptional circumstances are needed to provoke an enthusiasm something like this. Life in modern London even, in the heavy glow of summer, is stuff sufficient for the fresh imagination of a youth to build its "palace of art" of; and the very sense and enjoyment of an experience in which all is new, are but enhanced, like that glow of summer itself, by the thought of its brevity, giving him something of a gambler's zest, in the apprehension, by dexterous act or diligently appreciative thought, of the highly coloured moments which are to pass away so quickly. At bottom, perhaps, in his elaborately developed self-consciousness, his sensibilities, his almost fierce grasp upon the things he values at all, he has, beyond all others, an inward need of something permanent in its character, to hold by: of which circumstance, also, he may be partly aware, and that, as with the brilliant Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, it is, in truth, but darkness he is "encountering, like a bride". But the inevitable falling of the curtain is probably distant; and in the daylight, at least, it is not often that he really shudders at the thought of the grave—the weight above, the narrow world and its company, within. When the thought of it does occur to him, he may say to himself:—Well! and the rude monk, for instance, who has renounced all this, on the security of some dim world beyond it, really acquiesces in that "fifth act", amid all the consoling ministries around him, as little as I should at this moment; though I may hope, that, as at the real ending of a play, however well acted, I may already have had quite enough of it, and find a true well-being in eternal sleep.

And precisely in this circumstance, that, consistently with the function of youth in general, Cyrenaicism will always be more or less the special philosophy, or "prophecy", of the young, when the ideal of a rich experience comes to them in the ripeness of the receptive, if not of the reflective, powers—precisely in this circumstance, if we rightly consider it, lies the duly prescribed corrective of that philosophy. For it is by its exclusiveness, and by negation rather than positively, that such theories fail to satisfy us permanently; and what they really need for their correction, is the complementary influence of some greater system, in which they may find their due peace. That *Sturm und Drang* of the spirit, as it has been called, that ardent and special apprehension of half-truths, in the enthusiastic, and as it were "prophetic" advocacy of which, devotion to truth, in the case of the young—apprehending but one point at a time in the great circumference—most usually embodies itself, is levelled down, safely enough, afterwards, as in history so in the individual, by the weakness and mere

weariness, as well as by the maturer wisdom, of our nature. And though truth indeed, resides, as has been said, "in the whole"—in harmonisings and adjustments like this—yet those special apprehensions may still owe their full value, in this sense of "the whole", to that earlier, one-sided but ardent pre-occupation with them.

Cynicism and Cyrenaicism:—they are the earlier Greek forms of Roman Stoicism and Epicureanism, and in that world of old Greek thought, we may notice with some surprise that, in a little while, the nobler form of Cyrenaicism—Cyrenaicism cured of its faults—met the nobler form of Cynicism half-way. Starting from opposed points, they merged, each in its most refined form, in a single ideal of temperance or moderation. Something of the same kind may be noticed regarding some later phases of Cyrenaic theory. If it starts with considerations opposed to the religious temper, which the religious temper holds it a duty to repress, it is like it, nevertheless, and very unlike any lower development of temper, in its stress and earnestness, its serious application to the pursuit of a very unworldly type of perfection. The saint, and the Cyrenaic lover of beauty, it may be thought, would at least understand each other better than either would understand the mere man of the world. Carry their respective positions a point further, shift the terms a little, and they might actually touch.

Perhaps all theories of practice tend, as they rise to their best, as understood by their worthiest representatives, to identification with each other. For the variety of men's possible reflections on their experience, as of that experience itself, is not really so great as it seems; and as the highest and most disinterested ethical *formula*, filtering down into men's everyday existence, reach the same poor level of vulgar egotism, so, we may fairly suppose that all the highest spirits, from whatever contrasted points they have started, would yet be found to entertain, in the moral consciousness realised by themselves, much the same kind of mental company; to hold, far more than might be thought probable, at first sight, the same personal types of character, and even the same artistic and literary types, in esteem or aversion; to convey, all of them alike, the same savour of unworldliness. And Cyrenaicism or Epicureanism too, new or old, may be noticed, in proportion to the completeness of its development, to approach, as to the nobler form of Cynicism, so also to the more nobly developed phases of the old, or traditional morality. In the gravity of its conception of life, in its pursuit after nothing less than a perfection, in its apprehension of the value of time—the passion and the seriousness which are like a consecration—*la passion et le sérieux qui consacrent*—it may be conceived, as regards its main drift,

to be not so much opposed to the old morality, as an exaggeration of one special motive in it.

Some cramping, narrowing, costly preference of one part of his own nature, and of the nature of things, to another, Marius seemed to have detected in himself, meantime,—in himself, as also in those old masters of the Cyrenaic philosophy. If they did realise the *μονόχρονος ἡδονή*, as it was called—the pleasure of the “Ideal Now”—if certain moments of their lives were high-pitched, passionately coloured, intent with sensation, and a kind of knowledge which, in its vivid clearness, was like sensation—if, now and then, they apprehended the world in its fulness, and had a vision, almost “beatific”, of ideal personalities in life and art, yet these moments were a very costly matter: they paid a great price for them, in the sacrifice of a thousand possible sympathies, of things only to be enjoyed through sympathy, from which they detached themselves, in intellectual pride, in loyalty to a mere theory that would take nothing for granted, and assent to no approximate or hypothetical truths. In their unfriendly, repellent attitude towards the Greek religion, and the old Greek morality, surely, they had been but faulty economists. The Greek religion was then alive: then, still more than in its later day of dissolution, the higher view of it was possible, even for the philosopher. Its story made little or no demand for a reasoned or formal acceptance. A religion, which had grown through and through man’s life, with so many generations; which expressed so much of their hopes, in forms so familiar and so winning; linked by associations so manifold to man as he had been and was—a religion like this, one would think, might have had its uses, even for a philosophic sceptic. Yet those beautiful gods, with the whole round of their poetic worship, the school of Cyrene definitely renounced.

The old Greek morality, again, with all its imperfections, was certainly a comely thing.—Yes! a harmony, a music, in men’s ways, one might well hesitate to jar. The merely æsthetic sense might have had a legitimate satisfaction in the spectacle of that fair order of choice manners, in those attractive conventions, enveloping, so gracefully, the whole of life, insuring some sweetness, some security at least against offence, in the intercourse of the world. Beyond an obvious utility, it could claim, indeed but custom—use-and-wont, as we say—for its sanction. But then, one of the advantages of that liberty of spirit among the Cyrenaics (in which, through theory, they had become dead to theory, so that all theory, as such, was really indifferent to them, and indeed nothing valuable but in its tangible ministration to life) was precisely this, that it gave them free play in using as their ministers or servants, things which, to the uninitiated,

must be masters or nothing. Yet, how little the followers of Aristippus made of that whole comely system of manners or morals, then actually in possession of life, is shown by the bold practical consequence, which one of them maintained (with a hard, self-opinionated adherence to his peculiar theory of values) in the not very amiable paradox that friendship and patriotism were things one could do without; while another—*Death's-advocate*, as he was called—helped so many to self-destruction, by his pessimistic eloquence on the evils of life, that his lecture-room was closed. That this was in the range of their consequences—that this was a possible, if remote, deduction from the premisses of the discreet Aristippus—was surely an inconsistency in a thinker who professed above all things an economy of the moments of life. And yet those old Cyrenaics felt their way, as if in the dark, we may be sure, like other men in the ordinary transactions of life, beyond the narrow limits they drew of clear and absolutely legitimate knowledge, admitting what was not of immediate sensation, and drawing upon that “fantastic” future which might never come. A little more of such “walking by faith”, a little more of such not unreasonable “assent”, and they might have profited by a hundred services to their culture, from Greek religion and Greek morality, as they actually were. The spectacle of their fierce, exclusive, tenacious hold on their own narrow apprehension, makes one think of a picture with no relief, no soft shadows nor breadth of space, or of a drama without proportionate repose.

Yet it was of perfection that Marius (to return to him again from his masters, his intellectual heirs) had been really thinking all the time: a narrow perfection it might be objected, the perfection of but one part of his nature—his capacities of feeling, of exquisite physical impressions, of an imaginative sympathy—but still, a true perfection of those capacities, wrought out to their utmost degree, admirable enough in its way. He too is an economist: he hopes, by that “insight” of which the old Cyrenaics made so much, by skilful apprehension of the conditions of spiritual success as they really are, the special circumstances of the occasion with which he has to deal, the special felicities of his own nature, to make the most, in no mean or vulgar sense, of the few years of life; few, indeed, for the attainment of anything like general perfection! With the brevity of that sum of years his mind is exceptionally impressed; and this purpose makes him no frivolous *dilettante*, but graver than other men: his scheme is not that of a trifle, but rather of one who gives a meaning of his own, yet a very real one, to those old words—*Let us work while it is day!* He has a strong apprehension, also, of the beauty of the visible things around him; their fading, momentary, graces and attractions. His natural

susceptibility in this direction, enlarged by experience, seems to demand of him an almost exclusive pre-occupation with the *aspects* of things; with their æsthetic character, as it is called—their revelations to the eye and the imagination; not so much because those aspects of them yield him the largest amount of enjoyment, as because to be occupied, in this way, with the æsthetic or imaginative side of things, is to be in real contact with those elements of his own nature, and of theirs, which, for him at least, are matter of the most real kind of apprehension. As other men are concentrated upon truths of number, for instance, or on business, or it may be on the pleasures of appetite, so he is wholly bent on living in that full stream of refined sensation. And in the prosecution of this love of beauty, he claims an entire personal liberty, liberty of heart and mind, liberty, above all, from what may seem conventional answers to first questions.

But, without him there is a venerable system of sentiment and idea, widely extended in time and place, in a kind of impregnable possession of human life—a system, which, like some other great products of the conjoint efforts of human mind through many generations, is rich in the world's experience; so that, in attaching oneself to it, one lets in a great tide of that experience, and makes, as it were with a single step, a great experience of one's own, and with great consequent increase to one's sense of colour, variety, and relief, in the spectacle of men and things. The mere sense that one belongs to a system—an imperial system or organisation—has, in itself, the expanding power of a great experience; as some have felt who have been admitted from narrower sects into the communion of the catholic church; or as the old Roman citizen felt. It is, we might fancy, what the coming into possession of a very widely spoken language might be, with a great literature, which is also the speech of the people we have to live among.

A wonderful order, actually in possession of human life!—grown inextricably through and through it; penetrating into its laws, its very language, its mere habits of decorum, in a thousand half-conscious ways; yet still felt to be, in part, an unfulfilled ideal; and, as such, awakening hope, and an aim, identical with the one only consistent aspiration of mankind! In the apprehension of that, just then, Marius seemed to have joined company once more with his own old self; to have overtaken on the road the pilgrim who had come to Rome, with absolute sincerity, on the search for perfection. It defined not so much a change of practice, as of sympathy—a new departure, an expansion, of sympathy. It involved, certainly, some curtailment of his liberty, in concession to the actual manner, the distinctions, the enactments of that great crowd of admirable spirits, who have elected so, and not otherwise, in their conduct of life, and are not here to give one, so

to term it, an "indulgence". But then, under the supposition of their disapproval, no roses would ever seem worth plucking again. The authority they exercised was like that of classic taste—an influence so subtle, yet so real, as defining the loyalty of the scholar; or of some beautiful and venerable ritual, in which every observance is become spontaneous and almost mechanical, yet is found, the more carefully one considers it, to have a reasonable significance and a natural history.

And Marius saw that he would be but an inconsistent Cyrenaic, mistaken in his estimate of values, of loss and gain, and untrue to the well-considered economy of life which he had brought with him to Rome—that some drops of the great cup would fall to the ground—if he did not make that concession, if he did but remain just there.

CHAPTER XVII

BEATA URBS

"Many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see."

THE enemy on the Danube was, indeed, but the vanguard of the mighty invading hosts of the fifth century. Illusively repressed just now, those confused movements along the northern boundary of the Empire were destined to unite triumphantly at last, in the barbarism, which, powerless to destroy the Christian church, was yet to suppress for a time the achieved culture of the pagan world. The kingdom of Christ was to grow up in a somewhat false alienation from the light and beauty of the kingdom of nature, of the natural man, with a partly mistaken tradition concerning it, and an incapacity, as it might almost seem at times, for eventual reconciliation thereto. Meantime Italy had armed itself once more, in haste, and the imperial brothers set forth for the Alps.

Whatever misgiving the Roman people may have felt as to the leadership of the younger was unexpectedly set at rest; though with some temporary regret for the loss of what had been, after all, a popular figure on the world's stage. Travelling fraternally in the same litter with Aurelius, Lucius Verus was struck with sudden and mysterious disease, and died as he hastened back to Rome. His death awoke a swarm of sinister rumours, to settle on Lucilla, jealous, it was said, of Fabia her sister, perhaps of Faustina—on Faustina herself, who had accompanied the imperial progress, and was anxious now to hide a crime of her own—even on the elder brother, who, beforehand with the treasonable designs of his colleague, should have helped him

at supper to a favourite morsel, cut with a knife poisoned ingeniously on one side only. Aurelius, certainly, with sincere distress, his long irritations, so dutifully concealed or repressed, turning now into a single feeling of regret for the human creature, carried the remains back to Rome, and demanded of the Senate a public funeral, with a decree for the *apotheôsis*, or canonisation, of the dead.

For three days the body lay in state in the Forum, enclosed in an open coffin of cedar-wood, on a bed of ivory and gold, in the centre of a sort of temporary chapel, representing the temple of his patroness *Venus Genetrix*. Armed soldiers kept watch around it, while choirs of select voices relieved one another in the chanting of hymns or monologues from the great tragedians. At the head of the couch were displayed the various personal decorations which had belonged to Verus in life. Like all the rest of Rome, Marius went to gaze on the face he had seen last scarcely disguised under the hood of a travelling-dress, as the wearer hurried, at nightfall, along one of the streets below the palace, to some amorous appointment. Unfamiliar as he still was with dead faces, he was taken by surprise, and touched far beyond what he had reckoned on, by the piteous change there; even the skill of Galen having been not wholly successful in the process of embalming. It was as if a brother of his own were lying low before him, with that meek and helpless expression, it would have been a sacrilege to treat rudely.

Meantime, in the centre of the *Campus Martius*, within the grove of poplars which enclosed the space where the body of Augustus had been burnt, the great funeral pyre, stuffed with shavings of various aromatic woods, was built up in many stages, separated from each other by a light entablature of woodwork, and adorned abundantly with carved and tapestried images. Upon this pyramidal or flame-shaped structure lay the corpse, hidden now under a mountain of flowers and incense brought by the women, who from the first had had their fondness for the wanton graces of the deceased. The dead body was surmounted by a waxen effigy of great size, arrayed in the triumphal ornaments. At last the Centurions to whom that office belonged, drew near, torch in hand, to ignite the pile at its four corners, while the soldiers, in wild excitement, flung themselves around it, casting into the flames the decorations they had received for acts of valour under the dead emperor's command.

It had been a really heroic order, spoiled a little, at the last moment, through the somewhat tawdry artifice, by which an eagle—not a very noble or youthful specimen of its kind—was caused to take flight amid the real or affected awe of the spectators, above the perishing remains; a court chamberlain, according to ancient etiquette, subse-

quently making official declaration before the Senate, that the imperial "genius" had been seen in this way, escaping from the fire. And Marius was present when the Fathers, duly certified by the fact, by "acclamation", muttering their judgment all together, in a kind of low, rhythmical chant, decreed *Calum*—the privilege of divine rank to the departed.

The actual gathering of the ashes in a white cerecloth by the widowed Lucilla, when the last flicker had been extinguished by drops of wine; and the conveyance of them to the little cell already populous, in the central mass of the sepulchre of Hadrian, still in all the splendour of its statued colonnades, were a matter of private or domestic duty; after the due accomplishment of which Aurelius was at liberty to retire for a time into the privacy of his beloved apartments of the Palatine. And hither, not long afterwards, Marius was summoned a second time, to receive from the imperial hands the great pile of manuscripts it would be his business to revise and arrange.

One year had passed since his first visit to the palace; and as he climbed the stairs to-day, the great cypresses rocked against the sunless sky, like living creatures in pain. He had to traverse a long subterranean gallery, once a secret entrance to the imperial apartments, and in our own day, amid the ruin all of around it, as smooth and fresh as if the carpets were but just removed from its floor after the return of the emperor from the shows. It was here, on such an occasion, that the emperor Caligula, at the age of twenty-nine, had come by his end, the assassins gliding along it as he lingered a few moments longer to watch the movements of a party of noble youths at their exercise in the courtyard below. As Marius waited, a second time, in that little red room in the house of the chief chamberlain, curious to look once more upon its painted walls—the very place whither the assassins were said to have turned for refuge after the murder—he could all but see the figure, which in its surrounding light and darkness seemed to him the most melancholy in the entire history of Rome. He called to mind the greatness of that popularity and early promise—the stupefying height of irresponsible power, from which, after all, only men's viler side had been clearly visible—the overthrow of reason—the seemingly irredeemable memory; and still, above all, the beautiful head in which the noble lines of the race of Augustus were united to, he knew not what expression of sensibility and fineness, not theirs, and for the like of which one must pass onward to the Antonines. Popular hatred had been careful to destroy its semblance wherever it was to be found; but one bust, in dark bronze-like basalt of a wonderful perfection of finish, preserved in the museum of the Capitol, may have seemed to some visitors there perhaps the finest

extant relic of Roman art. Had the very seal of empire upon those sombre brows, reflected from his mirror, suggested his insane attempt upon the liberties, the dignity of men?—"O humanity!" he seems to ask, "what hast thou done to me that I should so despise thee?"—And might not this be indeed the true meaning of kingship, if the world would have one man to reign over it? The like of this: or, some incredible, surely never to be realised, height of disinterestedness, in a king who should be the servant of all, quite at the other extreme of the practical dilemma involved in such a position. Not till some while after his death had the body been decently interred by the piety of the sisters he had driven into exile. Fraternity of feeling had been no invariable feature in the incidents of Roman story. One long *Vicus Sceleratus*, from its first dim foundation in fraternal quarrel on the morrow of a common deliverance so touching—had not almost every step in it some gloomy memory of unnatural violence? Romans did well to fancy the traitress Tarpeia still "green in earth", crowned, enthroned, at the roots of the Capitoline rock. If in truth the religion of Rome was everywhere in it, like that perfume of the funeral incense still upon the air, so also was the memory of crime prompted by a hypocritical cruelty, down to the erring, or not erring, Vesta calmly buried alive there, only eighty years ago, under Domitian.

It was with a sense of relief that Marius found himself in the presence of Aurelius, whose gesture of friendly intelligence, as he entered, raised a smile at the gloomy train of his own thoughts just then, although since his first visit to the palace a great change had passed over it. The clear daylight found its way now into empty rooms. To raise funds for the war, Aurelius, his luxurious brother being no more, had determined to sell by auction the accumulated treasures of the imperial household. The works of art, the dainty furniture, had been removed, and were now "on view" in the Forum, to be the delight or dismay, for many weeks to come, of the large public of those who were curious in these things. In such wise had Aurelius come to the condition of philosophic detachment he had affected as a boy, hardly persuaded to wear warm clothing, or to sleep in more luxurious manner than on the bare floor. But, in his empty house, the man of mind, who had always made so much of the pleasures of philosophic contemplation, felt freer in thought than ever. He had been reading, with less self-reproach than usual, in the *Republic* of Plato, those passages which describe the life of the philosopher-kings—like that of hired servants in their own house—who, possessed of the "gold undefiled" of intellectual vision, forgo so cheerfully all other riches. It was one of his happy days; one of those rare days, when, almost with none of the effort, otherwise so constant with him,

his thoughts came rich and full, and converged in a mental view, as exhilarating to him as the prospect of some wide expanse of landscape to another man's bodily eye. He seemed to lie readier than was his wont to the imaginative influence of the philosophic reason—to its suggestions of a possible open country, commencing just where all actual experience leaves off, but which experience, one's own and not another's, may one day occupy. In fact, he was seeking strength for himself, in his own way, before he started for that ambiguous earthly warfare which was to occupy the remainder of his life. "Ever remember this," he writes, "that a happy life depends, not on *many* things—ἐν ὀλιγίστοις κεύται." And to-day, committing himself with a steady effort of volition to the mere silence of the great empty apartments, he might be said to have escaped, according to Plato's promise to those who live closely with philosophy, from the evils of the world.

In his "conversations with himself" Marcus Aurelius speaks often of that *City on high*, of which all other cities are but single habitations. From him in fact Cornelius Fronto, in his late discourse, had borrowed the expression; and he certainly meant by it more than the whole commonwealth of Rome, in any idealisation of it, however sublime. Incorporate somehow with the actual city whose goodly stones were lying beneath his gaze, it was also implicate in that reasonable constitution of nature, by devout contemplation of which it is possible for man to associate himself to the consciousness of God. In that *New Rome* he had taken up his rest for awhile on this day, deliberately feeding his thoughts on the better air of it, as another might have gone for mental renewal to a favourite villa.

"Men seek retirement in country-houses," he writes, "on the sea-coast, on the mountains; and you have yourself as much fondness for such places as another. But there is little proof of culture therein; since the privilege is yours of retiring into yourself whensoever you please,—into that little farm of one's own mind, where a silence so profound may be enjoyed." That it could make these retreats, was a plain consequence of the kingly prerogative of the mind, its dominion over circumstance, its inherent liberty.—"It is in thy power to think as thou wilt: The essence of things is in thy thoughts about them: All is opinion, conception: No man can be hindered by another: What is outside thy circle of thought is nothing at all to it; hold to this, and you are safe: One thing is needful—to live close to the divine genius within thee, and minister thereto worthily." And the first point in this true ministry, this culture, was to maintain one's soul in a condition of indifference and calm. How continually had public claims, the claims of other persons, with their rough angularities of character, broken in upon him, the shepherd of the flock. But after all he had

at least this privilege he could not part with, of thinking as he would; and it was well, now and then, by a conscious effort of will, to indulge it for a while, under systematic direction. The duty of thus making discreet, systematic use of the power of imaginative vision for purposes of spiritual culture, "since the soul takes colour from its fantasies", is a point he has frequently insisted on.

The influence of these seasonable meditations—a symbol, or sacrament, because an intensified condition, of the soul's own ordinary and natural life—would remain upon it, perhaps for many days. There were experiences he could not forget, intuitions beyond price, he had come by in this way, which were almost like the breaking of a physical light upon his mind; as the great Augustus was said to have seen a mysterious physical splendour, yonder, upon the summit of the Capitol, where the altar of the Sibyl now stood. With a prayer, therefore, for inward quiet, for conformity to the divine reason, he read some select passages of Plato, which bear upon the harmony of the reason, in all its forms, with itself.—"Could there be *Cosmos*, that wonderful, reasonable order, in him, and nothing but disorder in the world without?" It was from this question he had passed on to the vision of a reasonable, a divine, order, not in nature, but in the condition of human affairs—that unseen Celestial City, Uranopolis, Callipolis, *Urbs Beata*—in which, a consciousness of the divine will being everywhere realised, there would be, among other felicitous differences from this lower visible world, no more quite hopeless death, of men, or children, or of their affections. He had tried to-day, as never before, to make the most of this vision of a New Rome, to realise it as distinctly as he could, and, as it were, find his way along its streets, ere he went down into a world so irksomely different, to make his practical effort towards it, with a soul full of compassion for men as they were. However distinct the mental image might have been to him, with the descent of but one flight of steps into the marketplace below, it must have retreated again, as if at touch of some malign magic wand, beyond the utmost verge of the horizon. But it had been actually, in his clearest vision of it, a confused place, with but a recognisable entry, a tower or fountain, here or there, and haunted by strange faces, whose novel expression he, the great physiognomist, could by no means read. Plato, indeed, had been able to articulate, to see, at least in thought, his ideal city. But just because Aurelius had passed beyond Plato, in the scope of the gracious charities he pre-supposed there, he had been unable really to track his way about it. Ah! after all, according to Plato himself, all vision was but reminiscence, and this, his heart's desire, no place his soul could ever have visited in any region of the old world's achievements. He had but

divined, by a kind of generosity of spirit, the void place, which another experience than his must fill.

Yet Marius noted the wonderful expression of peace, of quiet pleasure, on the countenance of Aurelius, as he received from him the rolls of fine clear manuscript, fancying the thoughts of the emperor occupied at the moment with the famous prospect towards the Alban hills, from those lofty windows.

CHAPTER XVIII

“THE CEREMONY OF THE DART”

THE ideas of Stoicism, so precious to Marcus Aurelius, ideas of large generalisation, have sometimes induced, in those over whose intellects they have had real power, a coldness of heart. It was the distinction of Aurelius that he was able to harmonise them with the kindness, one might almost say the amenities, of a humourist, as also with the popular religion and its many gods. Those vast conceptions of the later Greek philosophy had in them, in truth, the germ of a sort of austere opinionative “natural theology”, and how often has that led to religious dryness—a hard contempt of everything in religion, which touches the senses, or charms the fancy, or really concerns the affections. Aurelius had made his own the secret of passing, naturally, and with no violence to his thought, to and fro, between the richly coloured and romantic religion of those old gods who had still been human beings, and a very abstract speculation upon the impassive, universal soul—that circle whose centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere—of which a series of purely logical necessities had evolved the formula. As in many another instance, those traditional pieties of the place and the hour had been derived by him from his mother:—*παρὰ τῆς μητρὸς τὸ θεοσεβές*. Purified, as all such religion of concrete time and place needs to be, by frequent confronting with the ideal of godhead as revealed to that innate religious sense in the possession of which Aurelius differed from the people around him, it was the ground of many a sociability with their simpler souls, and for himself, certainly, a consolation, whenever the wings of his own soul flagged in the trying atmosphere of purely intellectual vision. A host of companions, guides, helpers, about him from of old time, “the very court and company of heaven”, objects for him of personal reverence and affection—the supposed presence of the ancient popular gods determined the character of much of his daily life, and might prove the last stay of human nature at its weakest. “In every time

and place", he had said, "it rests with thyself to use the event of the hour religiously: at all seasons worship the gods." And when he said "Worship the gods!" he did it, as strenuously as everything else.

Yet here again, how often must he have experienced disillusion, or even some revolt of feeling, at that contact with coarser natures to which his religious conclusions exposed him. At the beginning of the year one hundred and seventy-three public anxiety was as great as ever; and as before it brought people's superstition into unreserved play. For seven days the images of the old gods, and some of the graver new ones, lay solemnly exposed in the open air, arrayed in all their ornaments, each in his separate resting-place, amid lights and burning incense, while the crowd, following the imperial example, daily visited them, with offerings of flowers to this or that particular divinity, according to the devotion of each.

But supplementing these older official observances, the very wildest gods had their share of worship,—strange creatures with strange secrets startled abroad into open daylight. The delirious sort of religion of which Marius was a spectator in the streets of Rome, during the seven days of the *Lectisternium*, reminded him now and again of an observation of Apuleius: it was "as if the presence of the gods did not do men good, but disordered or weakened them". Some jaded women of fashion, especially, found in certain oriental devotions, at once relief for their religiously tearful souls and an opportunity for personal display; preferring this or that "mystery", chiefly because the attire required in it was suitable to their peculiar manner of beauty. And one morning Marius encountered an extraordinary crimson object, borne in a litter through an excited crowd—the famous courtesan Benedicta, still fresh from the bath of blood, to which she had submitted herself, sitting below the scaffold where the victims provided for that purpose were slaughtered by the priests. Even on the last day of the solemnity, when the emperor himself performed one of the oldest ceremonies of the Roman religion, this fantastic piety had asserted itself. There were victims enough certainly, brought from the choice pastures of the Sabine mountains, and conducted around the city they were to die for, in almost continuous procession, covered with flowers and well-nigh worried to death before the time by the crowds of people superstitiously pressing to touch them. But certain old-fashioned Romans, in these exceptional circumstances, demanded something more than this, in the way of a human sacrifice after the ancient pattern; as when, not so long since, some Greeks or Gauls had been buried alive in the Forum. At least, human blood should be shed; and it was through a wild multitude of fanatics, cutting their flesh with knives and whips and licking up ardently the

crimson stream, that the emperor repaired to the temple of Bellona, and in solemn symbolic act cast the bloodstained spear, or "dart", carefully preserved there, towards the enemy's country—towards that unknown world of German homes, still warm, as some believed under the faint northern twilight, with those innocent affections of which Romans had lost the sense. And this at least was clear, amid all doubts of abstract right or wrong on either side, that the ruin of those homes was involved in what Aurelius was then preparing for, with,—Yes! the gods be thanked for that achievement of an invigorating philosophy!—almost with a light heart.

For, in truth, that departure, really so difficult to him, for which Marcus Aurelius had needed to brace himself so strenuously, came to test the power of a long-studied theory of practice; and it was the development of this theory—a *theôria*, literally—a view, an intuition, of the most important facts, and still more important possibilities, concerning man in the world, that Marius now discovered, almost as if by accident, below the dry surface of the manuscripts entrusted to him. The great purple rolls contained, first of all, statistics, a general historical account of the writer's own time, and an exact diary; all alike, though in three different degrees of nearness to the writer's own personal experience, laborious, formal, self-suppressing. This was for the instruction of the public; and part of it has, perhaps, found its way into the *Augustan Histories*. But it was for the especial guidance of his son Commodus that he had permitted himself to break out, here and there, into reflections upon what was passing, into conversations with the reader. And then, as though he were put off his guard in this way, there had escaped into the heavy matter-of-fact, of which the main portion was composed, morsels of his conversation with himself. It was the romance of a soul (to be graced only in hints, wayside notes, quotations from older masters), as it were in lifelong, and often baffled search after some vanished or elusive golden fleece, or Hesperidean fruit-trees, or some mysterious light of doctrine, ever retreating before him. A man, he had seemed to Marius from the first, of two lives, as we say. Of what nature, he had sometimes wondered, on the day, for instance, when he had interrupted the emperor's musings in the empty palace, might be that placid inward guest or inhabitant, who from amid the pre-occupations of the man of practical affairs looked out, as if surprised, at the things and faces around. Here, then, under the tame surface of what was meant for a life of business, Marius discovered, welcoming a brother, the spontaneous self-revelation of a soul as delicate as his own,—a soul for which conversation with itself was a necessity of existence. Marius, indeed, had always suspected that the sense of such necessity was a peculiarity of his. But

here, certainly, was another, in this respect like himself; and again he seemed to detect the advent of some new or changed spirit into the world, mystic, inward, hardly to be satisfied with that wholly external and objective habit of life, which had been sufficient for the old classic soul. His purely literary curiosity was greatly stimulated by this example of a book of self-portraiture. It was in fact the position of the modern essayist,—creature of efforts rather than of achievements, in the matter of apprehending truth, but at least conscious of lights by the way, which he must needs record, acknowledge. What seemed to underlie that position was the desire to make the most of every experience that might come, outwardly or from within: to perpetuate, to display, what was so fleeting, in a kind of instinctive, pathetic protest against the imperial writer's own theory—that theory of the “perpetual flux” of all things—to Marius himself, so plausible from of old.

There was, besides, a special moral or doctrinal significance in the making of such conversation with one's self at all. The *Logos*, the reasonable spark, in man, is common to him with the gods—κοινὸς αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς—*cum diis communis*. That might seem but the truism of a certain school of philosophy; but in Aurelius was clearly an original and lively apprehension. There could be no inward conversation with one's self such as this, unless there were indeed some one else, aware of our actual thoughts and feelings, pleased or displeased at one's disposition of one's self. Cornelius Fronto too could enounce that theory of the reasonable community between men and God, in many different ways. But then, he was a cheerful man, and Aurelius a singularly sad one; and what to Fronto was but a doctrine, or a motive of mere rhetoric, was to the other a consolation. He walks and talks, for a spiritual refreshment lacking which he would faint by the way, with what to the learned professor is but matter of philosophic eloquence.

In performing his public religious functions Marcus Aurelius had ever seemed like one who took part in some great process, a great thing really done, with more than the actually visible assistants about him. Here, in these manuscripts, in a hundred marginal flowers of thought or language, in happy new phrases of his own like the impromptus of an actual conversation, in quotations from other older masters of the inward life, taking new significance from the chances of such intercourse, was the record of his communion with that eternal reason, which was also his own proper self, with the divine companion, whose tabernacle was in the intelligence of men—the journal of his daily commerce with that.

Chance: or Providence! Chance: or Wisdom, one with nature and man, reaching from end to end, through all time and all existence,

orderly disposing all things, according to fixed periods, as he describes it, in terms very like certain well-known words of the book of *Wisdom*:—those are the “fenced opposites” of the speculative dilemma, the tragic *embarras*, of which Aurelius cannot too often remind himself as the summary of man’s situation in the world. If there be, however, a provident soul like this “behind the veil”, truly, even to him, even in the most intimate of those conversations, it has never yet spoken with any quite irresistible assertion of its presence. Yet one’s choice in that speculative dilemma, as he has found it, is on the whole a matter of will.—“’Tis in thy power,” here too, again, “to think as thou wilt.” For his part he has asserted his will, and has the courage of his opinion. “To the better of two things, if thou findest that, turn with thy whole heart: eat and drink ever of the best before thee.” “Wisdom,” says that other disciple of the *Sapiential* philosophy, “hath mingled Her wine, she hath also prepared Herself a table.” Τοῦ ἀριστοῦ ἀπόλαυε: “Partake ever of Her best!” And what Marius, peeping now very closely upon the intimacies of that singular mind, found a thing actually pathetic and affecting, was the manner of the writer’s bearing as in the presence of this supposed guest; so elusive, so jealous of any palpable manifestation of himself, so taxing to one’s faith, never allowing one to lean frankly upon him and feel wholly at rest. Only, he would do his part, at least, in maintaining the constant fitness, the sweetness and quiet, of the guest-chamber. Seeming to vary with the intellectual fortune of the hour, from the plainest account of experience, to a sheer fantasy, only “believed because it was impossible”, that one hope was, at all events, sufficient to make men’s common pleasures and their common ambition, above all their commonest vices, seem very petty indeed, too petty to know of. It bred in him a kind of *magnificence* of character, in the old Greek sense of the term; a temper incompatible with any merely plausible advocacy of his convictions, or merely superficial thoughts about anything whatever, or talk about other people, or speculation as to what was passing in their so visibly little souls, or much talking of any kind, however clever or graceful. A soul thus disposed had “already entered into the better life”:—was indeed in some sort “a priest, a minister of the gods”. Hence his constant “recollection”; a close watching of his soul, of a kind almost unique in the ancient world.—*Before all things examine into thyself: strive to be at home with thyself!*—Marius, a sympathetic witness of all this, might almost seem to have had a foresight of monasticism itself in the prophetic future. With this mystic companion he had gone a step onward out of the merely objective pagan existence. Here was already a master in that craft of self-direction, which was about to play so large a part in the forming of human

mind, under the sanction of the Christian church.

Yet it was in truth a somewhat melancholy service, a service on which one must needs move about, solemn, serious, depressed, with the hushed footsteps of those who move about the house where a dead body is lying. Such was the impression which occurred to Marius again and again as he read, with a growing sense of some profound dissidence from his author. By certain quite traceable links of association he was reminded, in spite of the moral beauty of the philosophic emperor's ideas, how he had sat, essentially unconcerned, at the public shows. For, actually, his contemplations had made him of a sad heart, inducing in him that melancholy—*Tristitia*—which even the monastic moralists have held to be of the nature of deadly sin, akin to the sin of *Desidia* or Inactivity. Resignation, a sombre resignation, a sad heart, patient bearing of the burden of a sad heart:—Yes! this belonged doubtless to the situation of an honest thinker upon the world. Only, in this case there seemed to be too much of a complacent acquiescence in the world as it is. And there could be no true *Théodicée* in that; no real accommodation of the world as it is, to the divine pattern of the *Logos*, the eternal reason, over against it. It amounted to a tolerance of evil.

The soul of good, though it moveth upon a way thou canst but little understand, yet prospereth on the journey:

If thou sufferest nothing contrary to nature, there can be nought of evil with thee therein:

If thou hast done aught in harmony with that reason in which men are communicant with the gods, there also can be nothing of evil with thee—nothing to be afraid of:

Whatever is, is right; as from the hand of one dispensing to every man according to his desert:

If reason fulfil its part in things, what more dost thou require?

Dost thou take it ill that thy stature is but of four cubits?

That which happeneth to each of us is for the profit of the whole:

The profit of the whole,—that was sufficient!

—Links, in a train of thought really generous! of which, nevertheless, the forced and yet facile optimism, refusing to see evil anywhere, might lack, after all, the secret of genuine cheerfulness. It left in truth a weight upon the spirits; and with that weight unlifted, there could be no real justification of the ways of Heaven to man. "Let thine air be cheerful," he had said; and, with an effort, did himself at times attain to that serenity of aspect, which surely ought to accompany, as their outward flower and favour, hopeful assumptions like those. Still, what in Aurelius was but a passing expression, was with Cornelius (Marius

could but note the contrast) nature, and a veritable physiognomy. With Cornelius, in fact, it was nothing less than the joy which Dante apprehended in the blessed spirits of the perfect, the outward semblance of which, like a reflex of physical light upon human faces from "the land which is very far off", we may trace from Giotto onward to its consummation in the work of Raphael—the serenity, the durable cheerfulness, of those who have been indeed delivered from death, and of which the utmost degree of that famed "blitheness" of the Greeks had been but a transitory gleam, as in careless and wholly superficial youth. And yet, in Cornelius, it was certainly united with the bold recognition of evil as a fact in the world; real as an aching in the head or heart, which one instinctively desires to have cured; an enemy with whom no terms could be made, visible, hatefully visible, in a thousand forms—the apparent waste of men's gifts in an early, or even in a late grave; the death, as such, of men, and even of animals; the disease and pain of the body.

And there was another point of dissidence between Aurelius and his reader.—The philosophic emperor was a despiser of the body. Since it is "the peculiar privilege of reason to move within herself, and to be proof against corporeal impressions, suffering neither sensation nor passion to break in upon her," it follows that the true interest of the spirit must ever be to treat the body—Well! as a corpse attached thereto, rather than as a living companion—nay, actually to promote its dissolution. In counterpoise to the inhumanity of this, presenting itself to the young reader as nothing less than a sin against nature, the very person of Cornelius was nothing less than a sanction of that reverent delight Marius had always had in the visible body of man. Such delight indeed had been but a natural consequence of the sensuous or materialistic character of the philosophy of his choice. Now to Cornelius the body of man was unmistakeably, as a later seer terms it, the one true temple in the world; or rather itself the proper object of worship, of a sacred service, in which the very finest gold might have its seemliness and due symbolic use:—Ah! and of what awe-stricken pity also, in its dejection, in the perishing gray bones of a poor man's grave!

Some flaw of vision, thought Marius, must be involved in the philosopher's contempt for it—some diseased point of thought, or moral dulness, leading logically to what seemed to him the strangest of all the emperor's inhumanities, the temper of the suicide; for which there was just then, indeed, a sort of *mania* in the world. "'Tis part of the business of life," he read, "to lose it handsomely." On due occasion, "one might give life the slip". The moral or mental powers might fail one; and then it were a fair question, precisely, whether the

time for taking leave was not come:—"Thou canst leave this prison when thou wilt. Go forth boldly!" Just there, in the bare capacity to entertain such question at all, there was what Marius, with a soul which must always leap up in loyal gratitude for mere physical sunshine, touching him as it touched the flies in the air, could not away with. There, surely, was a sign of some crookedness in the natural power of apprehension. It was the attitude, the melancholy intellectual attitude, of one who might be greatly mistaken in things—who might make the greatest of mistakes.

A heart that could forget itself in the misfortune, or even in the weakness of others:—of this Marius had certainly found the trace, as a confidant of the emperor's conversations with himself, in spite of those jarring inhumanities, of that pretension to a stoical indifference, and the many difficulties of his manner of writing. He found it again not long afterwards, in still stronger evidence, in this way. As he read one morning early, there slipped from the rolls of manuscript a sealed letter with the emperor's superscription, which might well be of importance, and he felt bound to deliver it at once in person; Aurelius being then absent from Rome in one of his favourite retreats, at Præneste, taking a few days of quiet with his young children, before his departure for the war. A whole day passed as Marius crossed the *Campagna* on horseback, pleased by the random autumn lights bringing out in the distance the sheep at pasture, the shepherds in their picturesque dress, the golden elms, tower and villa; and it was after dark that he mounted the steep street of the little hill-town to the imperial residence. He was struck by an odd mixture of stillness and excitement about the place. Lights burned at the windows. It seemed that numerous visitors were within, for the courtyard was crowded with litters and horses in waiting. For the moment, indeed, all larger cares, even the cares of war, of late so heavy a pressure, had been forgotten in what was passing with the little Annius Verus; who for his part had forgotten his toys, lying all day across the knees of his mother, as a mere child's ear-ache grew rapidly to alarming sickness with great and manifest agony, only suspended a little, from time to time, when from very weariness he passed into a few moments of unconsciousness. The country surgeon called in, had removed the imposthume with the knife. There had been a great effort to bear this operation, for the terrified child, hardly persuaded to submit himself, when his pain was at its worst, and even more for the parents. At length, amid a company of pupils pressing in with him, as the custom was, to watch the proceedings in the sick-room, the eminent Galen had arrived, only to pronounce the thing done visibly useless, the patient falling now into longer intervals of delirium. And thus, thrust on one side by the

crowd of departing visitors, Marius was forced into the privacy of a grief, the desolate face of which went deep into his memory, as he saw the emperor carry the child away—quite conscious at last, but with a touching expression upon it of weakness and defeat—pressed close to his bosom, as if he yearned just then for one thing only, to be united, to be absolutely one with it, in its obscure distress.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WILL AS VISION

Paratum cor meum deus! paratum cor meum!

THE emperor demanded a senatorial decree for the erection of images in memory of the dead prince; that a golden one should be carried, together with the other images, in the great procession of the *Circus*, and the addition of the child's name to the Hymn of the Salian Priests: and so, stifling private grief, without further delay set forth for the war.

True kingship, as Plato, the old master of Aurelius, had understood it, was essentially of the nature of a service. If so be, you can discover a mode of life more desirable than the being a king, for those who shall be kings; then, the true Ideal of the State will become a possibility; but not otherwise. And if the life of Beatific Vision be indeed possible, if philosophy really "concludes in an ecstasy", affording full fruition to the entire nature of man; then, for certain elect souls at least, a mode of life will have been discovered more desirable than to be a king. By love or fear you might induce such persons to forgo their privilege; to take upon them the distasteful task of governing other men, or even of leading them to victory in battle. But, by the very conditions of its tenure, their dominion would be wholly a ministry to others: they would have taken upon them "the form of a servant": they would be reigning for the wellbeing of others rather than their own. The true king, the righteous king, would be Saint Lewis, exiling himself from the better land and its perfected company—so real a thing to him, definite and real as the pictured scenes of his psalter—to take part in or to arbitrate men's quarrels, about the transitory appearances of things. In a lower degree (lower, in proportion as the highest Platonic dream is lower than any Christian vision) the true king would be Marcus Aurelius, drawn from the meditation of books, to be the ruler of the Roman people in peace, and still more, in war.

To Aurelius, certainly, the philosophic mood, the visions, however

dim, which this mood brought with it, were sufficiently pleasant to him, together with the endearments of his home, to make public rule nothing less than a sacrifice to himself according to Plato's requirement, now consummated in his setting forth for the campaign on the Danube. That it was such a sacrifice was to Marius visible fact, as he saw him ceremoniously lifted into the saddle amid all the pageantry of an imperial departure, yet with the air less of a sanguine and self-reliant leader than of one in some way or other already defeated. Through the fortune of the subsequent years, passing and repassing so inexplicably from side to side, the rumour of which reached him amid his own quiet studies, Marius seemed always to see that central figure, with its habitually dejected hue grown now to an expression of positive suffering, all the stranger from its contrast with the magnificent armour worn by the emperor on this occasion, as it had been worn by his predecessor Hadrian.

—Totus et argento contextus et auro:

clothed in its gold and silver, dainty as that old divinely constructed armour of which Homer tells, but without its miraculous lightness—he looked out baffled, labouring, moribund; a mere comfortless shadow taking part in some shadowy reproduction of the labours of Hercules, through those northern, mist-laden confines of the civilised world. It was as if the familiar soul which had been so friendly disposed towards him were actually departed to Hades; and when he read the *Conversations* afterwards, though his judgment of them underwent no material change, it was nevertheless with the allowance we make for the dead. The memory of that suffering image, while it certainly strengthened his adhesion to what he could accept at all in the philosophy of Aurelius, added a strange pathos to what must seem the writer's mistakes. What, after all, had been the meaning of that incident, observed as so fortunate an omen long since, when the prince, then a little child much younger than was usual, had stood in ceremony among the priests of Mars and flung his crown of flowers with the rest at the sacred image reclining on the *Pulvinar*? The other crowns lodged themselves here or there; when, Lo! the crown thrown by Aurelius, the youngest of them all, alighted upon the very brows of the god, as if placed there by a careful hand! He was still young, also, when on the day of his adoption by Antoninus Pius he saw himself in a dream, with as it were shoulders of ivory, like the images of the gods, and found them more capable than shoulders of flesh. Yet he was now wellnigh fifty years of age, setting out with two-thirds of life behind him, upon a labour which would fill the remainder

of it with anxious cares—a labour for which he had perhaps no capacity, and certainly no taste.

That ancient suit of armour was almost the only object Aurelius now possessed from all those much cherished articles of *virtu* collected by the Cæsars, making the imperial residence like a magnificent museum. Not men alone were needed for the war, so that it became necessary, to the great disgust alike of timid persons and of the lovers of sport, to arm the gladiators, but money also was lacking. Accordingly, at the sole motion of Aurelius himself, unwilling that the public burden should be further increased, especially on the part of the poor, the whole of the imperial ornaments and furniture, a sumptuous collection of gems formed by Hadrian, with many works of the most famous painters and sculptors, even the precious ornaments of the emperor's chapel or *Lararium*, and the wardrobe of the empress Faustina, who seems to have borne the loss without a murmur, were exposed for public auction. "These treasures," said Aurelius, "like all else that I possess, belong by right to the Senate and People." Was it not a characteristic of the true kings in Plato that they had in their houses nothing they could call their own? Connoisseurs had a keen delight in the mere reading of the *Prætor's* list of the property for sale. For two months the learned in these matters were daily occupied in the appraising of the embroidered hangings, the choice articles of personal use selected for preservation by each succeeding age, the great outlandish pearls from Hadrian's favourite cabinet, the marvellous plate lying safe behind the pretty iron wicker-work of the shops in the goldsmiths' quarter. Meantime ordinary persons might have an interest in the inspection of objects which had been as daily companions to people so far above and remote from them—things so fine also in workmanship and material as to seem, with their antique and delicate air, a worthy survival of the grand bygone eras, like select thoughts or utterances embodying the very spirit of the vanished past. The town became more pensive than ever over old fashions.

The welcome amusement of this last act of preparation for the great war being now over, all Rome seemed to settle down into a singular quiet, likely to last long, as though bent only on watching from afar the languid, somewhat uneventful course of the contest itself. Marius took advantage of it as an opportunity for still closer study than of old, only now and then going out to one of his favourite spots on the Sabine or Alban hills for a quiet even greater than that of Rome in the country air. On one of these occasions, as if by favour of an invisible power withdrawing some unknown cause of dejection from around him, he enjoyed a quite unusual sense of self-possession—

the possession of his own best and happiest self. After some gloomy thoughts over-night, he awoke under the full tide of the rising sun, himself full, in his entire refreshment, of that almost religious appreciation of sleep, the graciousness of its influence on men's spirits, which had made the old Greeks conceive of it as a god. It was like one of those old joyful wakings of childhood, now becoming rarer and rarer with him, and looked back upon with much regret as a measure of advancing age. In fact, the last bequest of this serene sleep had been a dream, in which, as once before, he overheard those he loved best pronouncing his name very pleasantly, as they passed through the rich light and shadow of a summer morning, along the pavement of a city—Ah! fairer far than Rome! In a moment, as he arose, a certain oppression of late setting very heavily upon him was lifted away, as though by some physical motion in the air.

That flawless serenity, better than the most pleasurable excitement, yet so easily ruffled by chance collision even with the things and persons he had come to value as the greatest treasure in life, was to be wholly his today, he thought, as he rode towards Tibur, under the early sunshine; the marble of its villas glistening all the way before him on the hillside. And why could he not hold such serenity of spirit ever at command? he asked, expert as he was at last become in the art of setting the house of his thoughts in order. "'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt": he repeated to himself: it was the most serviceable of all the lessons enforced on him by those imperial *conversations*.—" 'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt." And were the cheerful, sociable, restorative beliefs, of which he had there read so much, that bold adhesion, for instance, to the hypothesis of an eternal friend to man, just hidden behind the veil of a mechanical and material order, but only just behind it, ready perhaps even now to break through:—were they, after all, really a matter of choice, dependent on some deliberate act of volition on his part? Were they doctrines one might take for granted, generously take for granted, and led on by them, at first as but well-defined objects of hope, come at last into the region of a corresponding certitude of the intellect? "It is the truth I seek," he had read, "the truth, by which no one," gray and depressing though it might seem, "was ever really injured". And yet, on the other hand, the imperial wayfarer, he had been able to go along with so far on his intellectual pilgrimage, let fall many things concerning the practicability of a methodical and self-forced assent to certain principles or pre-suppositions "one could not do without". Were there, as the expression "*one could not do without*" seemed to hint, beliefs, without which life itself must be almost impossible, principles which had their sufficient ground of evidence in

that very fact? Experience certainly taught that, as regarding the sensible world he could attend or not, almost at will, to this or that colour, this or that train of sounds, in the whole tumultuous concourse of colour and sound, so it was also, for the well-trained intelligence, in regard to that hum of voices which besiege the inward no less than the outward ear. Might it be not otherwise with those various and competing hypotheses, the permissible hypotheses, which, in that open field for hypothesis—one's own actual ignorance of the origin and tendency of our being—present themselves so importunately, some of them with so emphatic a reiteration, through all the mental changes of successive ages? Might the will itself be an organ of knowledge, of vision?

On this day truly no mysterious light, no irresistibly leading hand from afar reached him; only the peculiarly tranquil influence of its first hour increased steadily upon him, in a manner with which, as he conceived, the aspects of the place he was then visiting had something to do. The air there, air supposed to possess the singular property of restoring the whiteness of ivory, was pure and thin. An even veil of lawn-like white cloud had now drawn over the sky; and under its broad, shadowless light every hue and tone of time came out upon the yellow old temples, the elegant pillared circle of the shrine of the patronal Sibyl, the houses seemingly of a piece with the ancient fundamental rock. Some half-conscious motive of poetic grace would appear to have determined their grouping; in part resisting, partly going along with the natural wildness and harshness of the place, its floods and precipices. An air of immense age possessed, above all, the vegetation around—a world of evergreen trees—the olives especially, older than how many generations of men's lives! fretted and twisted by the combining forces of life and death, into every conceivable caprice of form. In the windless weather all seemed to be listening to the roar of the immemorial waterfall, plunging down so unassociably among these human habitations, and with a motion so unchanging from age to age as to count, even in this time-worn place, as an image of unalterable rest. Yet the clear sky all but broke to let through the ray which was silently quickening everything in the late February afternoon, and the unseen violet refined itself through the air. It was as if the spirit of life in nature were but withholding any too precipitate revelation of itself, in its slow, wise, maturing work.

Through some accident to the trappings of his horse at the inn where he rested, Marius had an unexpected delay. He sat down in an olive-garden, and, all around him and within still turning to reverie, the course of his own life hitherto seemed to withdraw itself into some other world, departed from this spectacular point where

he was now placed to survey it, like that distant road below, along which he had travelled this morning across the Campagna. Through a dreamy land he could see himself moving, as if in another life, and like another person, through all his fortunes and misfortunes, passing from point to point, weeping, delighted, escaping from various dangers. That prospect brought him, first of all, an impulse of lively gratitude: it was as if he must look round for some one else to share his joy with: for some one to whom he might tell the thing, for his own relief. Companionship, indeed, familiarity with others, gifted in this way or that, or at least pleasant to him, had been, through one or another long span of it, the chief delight of the journey. And was it only the resultant general sense of such familiarity, diffused through his memory, that in a while suggested the question whether there had not been—besides Flavian, besides Cornelius even, and amid the solitude which in spite of ardent friendship he had perhaps loved best of all things—some other companion, an unfailing companion, ever at his side throughout; doubling his pleasure in the roses by the way, patient of his peevishness or depression, sympathetic above all with his grateful recognition, onward from his earliest days, of the fact that he was there at all? Must not the whole world around have faded away for him altogether, had he been left for one moment really alone in it? In his deepest apparent solitude there had been rich entertainment. It was as if there were not one only, but two wayfarers, side by side, visible there across the plain, as he indulged his fancy. A bird came and sang among the wattled hedge-roses: an animal feeding crept nearer: the child who kept it was gazing quietly: and the scene and the hours still conspiring, he passed from that mere fantasy of a self not himself, beside him in his coming and going, to those divinations of a living and companionable spirit at work in all things, of which he had become aware from time to time in his old philosophic readings—in Plato and others, last but not least, in Aurelius. Through one reflection upon another, he passed from such instinctive divinations, to the thoughts which give them logical consistency, formulating at last, as the necessary exponent of our own and the world's life, that reasonable Ideal to which the Old Testament gives the name of *Creator*, which for the philosophers of Greece is the *Eternal Reason*, and in the New Testament the *Father of Men*—even as one builds up from act and word and expression of the friend actually visible at one's side, an ideal of the spirit within him.

In this peculiar and privileged hour, his bodily frame, as he could recognise, although just then, in the whole sum of its capacities, so entirely possessed by him—Nay! actually his very self—was yet determined by a far-reaching system of material forces external to it, a

thousand combining currents from earth and sky. Its seemingly active powers of apprehension were, in fact, but susceptibilities to influence. The perfection of its capacity might be said to depend on its passive surrender, as of a leaf on the wind, to the motions of the great stream of physical energy without it. And might not the intellectual frame also, still more intimately himself as in truth it was, after the analogy of the bodily life, be a moment only, an impulse or series of impulses, a single process, in an intellectual or spiritual system external to it, diffused through all time and place—that great stream of spiritual energy, of which his own imperfect thoughts, yesterday or to-day, would be but the remote, and therefore imperfect pulsations? It was the hypothesis (boldest, though in reality the most conceivable of all hypotheses) which had dawned on the contemplations of the two opposed great masters of the old Greek thought, alike:—the “World of Ideas”, existent only because, and in so far as, they are known, as Plato conceived; the “creative, incorruptible, informing mind”, supposed by Aristotle, so sober-minded, yet as regards this matter left something of a mystic after all. Might not this entire material world, the very scene around him, the immemorial rocks, the firm marble, the olive-gardens, the falling water, be themselves but reflections in, or a creation of, that one indefectible mind, wherein he too became conscious, for an hour, a day, for so many years? Upon what other hypothesis could he so well understand the persistency of all these things for his own intermittent consciousness of them, for the intermittent consciousness of so many generations, fleeting away one after another? It was easier to conceive of the material fabric of things as but an element in a world of thought—as a thought in a mind, than of mind as an element, or accident, or passing condition in a world of matter, because mind was really nearer to himself: it was an explanation of what was less known by what was known better. The purely material world, that close, impassable prison-wall, seemed just then the unreal thing, to be actually dissolving away all around him: and he felt a quiet hope, a quiet joy dawning faintly, in the dawning of this doctrine upon him as a really credible opinion. It was like the break of day over some vast prospect with the “new city”, as it were some celestial New Rome, in the midst of it. That divine companion figured no longer as but an occasional wayfarer beside him; but rather as the unfailling “assistant”, without whose inspiration and concurrence he could not breathe or see, instrumenting his bodily senses, rounding, supporting his imperfect thoughts. How often had the thought of their brevity spoiled for him the most natural pleasures of life, confusing even his present sense of them by the suggestion of disease, of death, of a coming end, in everything!

How had he longed, sometimes, that there were indeed one to whose boundless power of memory he could commit his own most fortunate moments, his admiration, his love, Ay! the very sorrows of which he could not bear quite to lose the sense:—one strong to retain them even though he forgot, in whose more vigorous consciousness they might subsist for ever, beyond that mere quickening of capacity which was all that remained of them in himself! “Oh! that they might live before Thee!”—To-day at least, in the peculiar clearness of one privileged hour, he seemed to have apprehended that in which the experiences he valued most might find, one by one, an abiding-place. And again, the resultant sense of companionship, of a person beside him, evoked the faculty of conscience—of conscience, as of old and when he had been at his best, in the form, not of fear, nor of self-reproach even, but of a certain lively gratitude.

Himself—his sensations and ideas—never fell again precisely into focus as on that day, yet he was the richer by its experience. But for once only to have come under the power of that peculiar mood, to have felt the train of reflections which belong to it really forcible and conclusive, to have been led by them to a conclusion, to have apprehended the *Great Ideal*, so palpably that it defined personal gratitude and the sense of a friendly hand laid upon him amid the shadows of the world, left this one particular hour a marked point in life never to be forgotten. It gave him a definitely ascertained measure of his moral or intellectual need, of the demand his soul must make upon the powers, whatsoever they might be, which had brought him, as he was, into the world at all. And again, would he be faithful to himself, to his own habits of mind, his leading suppositions, if he did but remain just there? Must not all that remained of life be but a search for the equivalent of that Ideal, among so-called actual things—a gathering together of every trace or token of it, which his actual experience might present?

PART THE FOURTH

CHAPTER XX

TWO CURIOUS HOUSES

I. GUESTS

"Your old men shall dream dreams."

A NATURE like that of Marius, composed, in about equal parts, of instincts almost physical, and of slowly accumulated intellectual judgments, was perhaps even less susceptible than other men's characters of essential change. And yet the experience of that fortunate hour, seeming to gather into one central act of vision all the deeper impressions his mind had ever received, did not leave him quite as he had been. For his mental view, at least, it changed measurably the world about him, of which he was still indeed a curious spectator, but which looked further off, was weaker in its hold, and, in a sense, less real to him than ever. It was as if he viewed it through a diminishing glass. And the permanency of this change he could note, some years later, when it happened that he was a guest at a feast, in which the various exciting elements of Roman life, its physical and intellectual accomplishments, its frivolity and far-fetched elegances, its strange, mystic essays after the unseen, were elaborately combined. The great Apuleius, the literary ideal of his boyhood, had arrived in Rome,—was now visiting Tusculum, at the house of their common friend, a certain aristocratic poet who loved every sort of superiorities; and Marius was favoured with an invitation to a supper given in his honour.

It was with a feeling of half-humorous concession to his own early boyish hero-worship, yet with some sense of superiority in himself, seeing his old curiosity grown now almost to indifference when on the point of satisfaction at last, and upon a juster estimate of its object, that he mounted to the little town on the hillside, the footways of which were so many flights of easy-going steps gathered round a single great house under shadow of the "haunted" ruins of Cicero's villa on the wooded heights. He found a touch of weirdness in the circumstance that in so romantic a place he had been bidden to meet the writer who was come to seem almost like one of the personages in his own fiction. As he turned now and then to gaze

at the evening scene through the tall narrow openings of the street, up which the cattle were going home slowly from the pastures below, the Alban mountains, stretched between the great walls of the ancient houses, seemed close at hand—a screen of vaporous dun purple against the setting sun—with those waves of surpassing softness in the boundary lines which indicate volcanic formation. The coolness of the little brown market-place, for profit of which even the working-people, in long file through the olive-gardens, were leaving the plain for the night, was grateful, after the heats of Rome. Those wild country figures, clad in every kind of fantastic patchwork, stained by wind and weather fortunately enough for the eye, under that significant light inclined him to poetry. And it was a very delicate poetry of its kind that seemed to enfold him, as passing into the poet's house he paused for a moment to glance back towards the heights above; whereupon the numerous cascades of the precipitous garden of the villa, framed in the doorway of the hall, fell into a harmless picture, in its place among the pictures within, and scarcely more real than they—a landscape-piece, in which the power of water (plunging into what unseen depths!) done to the life, was pleasant, and without its natural terrors.

At the further end of this bland apartment, fragrant with the rare woods of the old inlaid panelling, the falling of aromatic oil from the ready-lighted lamps, the iris-root clinging to the dresses of the guests, as with odours from the altars of the gods, the supper-table was spread, in all the daintiness characteristic of the agreeable *petit-mâitre*, who entertained. He was already most carefully dressed, but, like Martial's Stella, perhaps consciously, meant to change his attire once and again during the banquet; in the last instance, for an ancient vesture (object of much rivalry among the young men of fashion, at that great sale of the imperial wardrobes) a toga, of altogether lost hue and texture. He wore it with a grace which became the leader of a thrilling movement then on foot for the restoration of that disused garment, in which, laying aside the customary evening dress, all the visitors were requested to appear, setting off the delicate sinuosities and well-disposed "golden ways" of its folds, with harmoniously tinted flowers. The opulent sunset, blending pleasantly with artificial light, fell across the quiet ancestral effigies of old consular dignitaries, along the wide floor strewn with sawdust of sandal-wood, and lost itself in the heap of cool coronals, lying ready for the foreheads of the guests on a sideboard of old citron. The crystal vessels darkened with old wine, the hues of the early autumn fruit—mulberries, pomegranates, and grapes that had long been hanging under careful protection upon the vines, were almost as much a feast for the eye, as

the dusky fires of the rare twelve-petalled roses. A favourite animal, white as snow, brought by one of the visitors, purred its way gravely among the wine-cups, coaxed onward from place to place by those at table, as they reclined easily on their cushions of German eider-down, spread over the long-legged, carved couches.

A highly refined modification of the *acroama*—a musical performance during supper for the diversion of the guests—was presently heard hovering round the place, soothingly, and so unobtrusively that the company could not guess, and did not like to ask, whether or not it had been designed by their entertainer. They inclined on the whole to think it some wonderful peasant-music peculiar to that wild neighbourhood, turning, as it did now and then, to a solitary reed-note, like a bird's, while it wandered into the distance. It wandered quite away at last, as darkness with a bolder lamplight came on, and made way for another sort of entertainment. An odd, rapid, phantasmal glitter, advancing from the garden by torchlight, defined itself, as it came nearer, into a dance of young men in armour. Arrived at length in a portico, open to the supper-chamber, they contrived that their mechanical march-movement should fall out into a kind of highly expressive dramatic action; and with the utmost possible emphasis of dumb motion, their long swords weaving a silvery network in the air, they danced the *Death of Paris*. The young Commodus, already an adept in these matters, who had condescended to welcome the eminent Apuleius at the banquet, had mysteriously dropped from his place to take his share in the performance; and at its conclusion reappeared, still wearing the dainty accoutrements of Paris, including a breast-plate, composed entirely of overlapping tigers' claws, skilfully gilt. The youthful prince had lately assumed the dress of manhood, on the return of the emperor for a brief visit from the North; putting up his hair, in imitation of Nero, in a golden box dedicated to Capitoline Jupiter. His likeness to Aurelius, his father, was become, in consequence, more striking than ever; and he had one source of genuine interest in the great literary guest of the occasion, in that the latter was the fortunate possessor of a monopoly for the exhibition of wild beasts and gladiatorial shows in the province of Carthage, where he resided.

Still, after all complaisance to the perhaps somewhat crude tastes of the emperor's son, it was felt that with a guest like Apuleius whom they had come prepared to entertain as veritable *connoisseurs*, the conversation should be learned and superior, and the host at last deftly led his company round to literature, by the way of bindings. Elegant rolls of manuscript from his fine library of ancient Greek books passed from hand to hand about the table. It was a sign for the

visitors themselves to draw their own choicest literary curiosities from their bags, as their contribution to the banquet; and one of them, a famous reader, choosing his lucky moment, delivered in *tenor* voice the piece which follows, with a preliminary query as to whether it could indeed be the composition of Lucian of Samosata, understood to be the great mocker of that day:—

“What sound was that, Socrates?” asked Chærephon. “It came from the beach under the cliff yonder, and seemed a long way off.—And how melodious it was! Was it a bird, I wonder. I thought all sea-birds were songless.”

“Ay! a sea-bird,” answered Socrates, “a bird called the Halcyon, and has a note full of plaining and tears. There is an old story people tell of it. It was a mortal woman once, daughter of Æolus, god of the winds. Ceyx, the son of the morning-star, wedded her in her early maidenhood. The son was not less fair than the father; and when it came to pass that he died, the crying of the girl as she lamented his sweet usage, was,—just that! And some while after, as Heaven willed, she was changed into a bird. Floating now on bird’s wings over the sea she seeks her lost Ceyx there; since she was not able to find him after long wandering over the land.”

“That then is the Halcyon—the kingfisher,” said Chærephon. “I never heard a bird like it before. It has truly a plaintive note. What kind of a bird is it, Socrates?”

“Not a large bird, though she has received large honour from the gods on account of her singular conjugal affection. For whensoever she makes her nest, a law of nature brings round what is called Halcyon’s weather,—days distinguishable among all others for their serenity, though they come sometimes amid the storms of winter—days like to-day! See how transparent is the sky above us, and how motionless the sea!—like a smooth mirror.”

“True! A Halcyon day, indeed! and yesterday was the same. But tell me, Socrates, what is one to think of those stories which have been told from the beginning, of birds changed into mortals and mortals into birds? To me nothing seems more incredible.”

“Dear Chærephon,” said Socrates, “methinks we are but half-blind judges of the impossible and the possible. We try the question by the standard of our human faculty, which avails neither for true knowledge, nor for faith, nor vision. Therefore many things seem to us impossible which are really easy, many things unattainable which are within our reach; partly through inexperience, partly through the childishness of our minds. For in truth, every man, even the oldest of us, is like a little child, so brief and babyish are the years of our life in comparison of eternity. Then, how can we, who com-

prehend not the faculties of gods and of the heavenly host, tell whether aught of that kind be possible or no?—What a tempest you saw three days ago! One trembles but to think of the lightning, the thunder-claps, the violence of the wind! You might have thought the whole world was going to ruin. And then, after a little, came this wonderful serenity of weather, which has continued till to-day. Which do you think the greater and more difficult thing to do:—to exchange the disorder of that irresistible whirlwind to a clarity like this, and becalm the whole world again, or to refashion the form of a woman into that of a bird? We can teach even little children to do something of that sort,—to take wax or clay, and mould out of the same material many kinds of form, one after another, without difficulty. And it may be that to the Deity, whose power is too vast for comparison with ours, all processes of that kind are manageable and easy. How much wider is the whole circle of heaven than thyself?—Wider than thou canst express.

“Among ourselves also, how vast the difference we may observe in men’s degrees of power! To you and me, and many another like us, many things are impossible which are quite easy to others. For those who are unmusical, to play on the flute; to read or write, for those who have not yet learned; is no easier than to make birds of women, or women of birds. From the dumb and lifeless egg Nature moulds her swarms of winged creatures, aided, as some will have it, by a divine and secret art in the wide air around us. She takes from the honeycomb a little memberless live thing; she brings it wings and feet, brightens and beautifies it with quaint variety of colour:—and Lo! the bee in her wisdom, making honey worthy of the gods.

“It follows, that we mortals, being altogether of little account, able wholly to discern no great matter, sometimes not even a little one, for the most part at a loss regarding what happens even with ourselves, may hardly speak with security as to what may be the powers of the immortal gods concerning Kingfisher, or Nightingale. Yet the glory of thy mythus, as my fathers bequeathed it to me, O tearful songstress! that will I too hand on to my children, and tell it often to my wives, Xanthippe and Myrto:—the story of thy pious love to Ceyx, and of thy melodious hymns; and, above all, of the honour thou hast with the gods!”

The reader’s well-turned periods seemed to stimulate, almost uncontrollably, the eloquent stirrings of the eminent man of letters then present. The impulse to speak masterfully was visible, before the recital was well over, in the moving lines about his mouth, by no means designed, as detractors were wont to say, simply to display the beauty of his teeth. One of the company, expert in his humours,

made ready to transcribe what he would say, the sort of things of which a collection was then forming, the "Florida" or Flowers, so to call them, he was apt to let fall by the way—no *impromptu* ventures at random; but rather elaborate, carved ivories of speech, drawn, at length, out of the rich treasure-house of a memory stored with such, and as with a fine savour of old musk about them. Certainly in this case, as Marius thought, it was worth while to hear a charming writer speak. Discussing, quite in our modern way, the peculiarities of those suburban views, especially the sea-views, of which he was a professed lover, he was also every inch a priest of Aesculapius, patronal god of Carthage. There was a piquancy in his *rococo*, very African, and as it were perfumed personality, though he was now well-nigh sixty years old, a mixture there of that sort of Platonic spiritualism which can speak of the soul of man as but a sojourner in the prison of the body—a blending of that with such a relish for merely bodily graces as availed to set the fashion in matters of dress, deportment, accent, and the like, nay! with something also which reminded Marius of the vein of coarseness he had found in the "Golden Book". All this made the total impression he conveyed a very uncommon one. Marius did not wonder, as he watched him speaking, that people freely attributed to him many of the marvellous adventures he had recounted in that famous romance, over and above the wildest version of his own actual story—his extraordinary marriage, his religious initiations, his acts of mad generosity, his trial as a sorcerer.

But a sign came from the imperial prince that it was time for the company to separate. He was entertaining his immediate neighbours at the table with a trick from the streets; tossing his olives in rapid succession into the air, and catching them, as they fell, between his lips. His dexterity in this performance made the mirth around him noisy, disturbing the sleep of the furry visitor: the learned party broke up; and Marius withdrew, glad to escape into the open air. The courtesans in their large wigs of false blond hair, were lurking for the guests, with groups of curious idlers. A great conflagration was visible in the distance. Was it in Rome; or in one of the villages of the country? Pausing for a few minutes on the terrace to watch it, Marius was for the first time able to converse intimately with Apuleius; and in this moment of confidence the "illuminist", himself with locks so carefully arranged, and seemingly so full of affectations, almost like one of those light women there, dropped a veil as it were, and appeared, though still permitting the play of a certain element of theatrical interest in his *bizarre* tenets, to be ready to explain and defend his position reasonably. For a moment his fantastic foppishness and his pretensions to ideal vision seemed to fall into some

intelligible congruity with each other. In truth, it was the Platonic Idealism, as he conceived it, which for him literally animated, and gave him so lively an interest in, this world of the purely outward aspects of men and things.—Did material things, such things as they had had around them all that evening, really need apology for being there, to interest one, at all? Were not all visible objects—the whole material world indeed, according to the consistent testimony of philosophy in many forms—"full of souls"? embarrassed perhaps, partly imprisoned, but still eloquent souls? Certainly, the contemplative philosophy of Plato, with its figurative imagery and apologue, its manifold æsthetic colouring, its measured eloquence, its music for the outward ear, had been, like Plato's old master himself, a two-sided or two-coloured thing. Apuleius was a Platonist: only, for him, the *Ideas* of Plato were no creatures of logical abstraction, but in very truth informing souls, in every type and variety of sensible things. Those noises in the house all supper-time, sounding through the tables and along the walls:—were they only startings in the old rafters, at the impact of the music and laughter; or rather importunities of the secondary selves, the true unseen selves, of the persons, nay! of the very things around, essaying to break through their frivolous, merely transitory surfaces, to remind one of abiding essentials beyond them, which might have their say, their judgment to give, by and by, when the shifting of the meats and drinks at life's table would be over? And was not this the true significance of the Platonic doctrine?—a hierarchy of divine beings, associating themselves with particular things and places, for the purpose of mediating between God and man—man, who does but need due attention on his part to become aware of his celestial company, filling the air about him, thick as notes in the sunbeam, for the glance of sympathetic intelligence he casts through it.

"Two kinds there are, of animated beings," he exclaimed: "Gods, entirely differing from men in the infinite distance of their abode, since one part of them only is seen by our blunted vision—those mysterious stars!—in the eternity of their existence, in the perfection of their nature, infected by no contact with ourselves, and men, dwelling on the earth, with frivolous and anxious minds, with infirm and mortal members, with variable fortunes; labouring in vain; taken altogether and in their whole species perhaps, eternal; but, severally, quitting the scene in irresistible succession.

"What then? Has nature connected itself together by no bond, allowed itself to be thus crippled, and split into the divine and human elements? And you will say to me: If so it be, that man is thus entirely exiled from the immortal gods, that all communication is denied

him, that not one of them occasionally visits us, as a shepherd his sheep—to whom shall I address my prayers? Whom shall I invoke as the helper of the unfortunate, the protector of the good?

“Well! there are certain divine powers of a middle nature, through whom our aspirations are conveyed to the gods, and theirs to us. Passing between the inhabitants of earth and heaven, they carry from one to the other prayers and bounties, supplication and assistance, being a kind of interpreters. This interval of the air is full of them! Through them, all revelations, miracles, magic processes, are effected. For, specially appointed members of this order have their special provinces, with a ministry according to the disposition of each. They go to and fro without fixed habitation: or dwell in men’s houses”—

Just then a companion’s hand laid in the darkness on the shoulder of the speaker carried him away, and the discourse broke off suddenly. Its singular intimations, however, were sufficient to throw back on this strange evening, in all its detail—the dance, the readings, the distant fire—a kind of allegoric expression: gave it the character of one of those famous Platonic figures or apologues which had then been in fact under discussion. When Marius recalled its circumstances he seemed to hear once more that voice of genuine conviction, pleading, from amidst a scene at best of elegant frivolity, for so boldly mystical a view of man and his position in the world. For a moment, but only for a moment, as he listened, the trees had seemed, as of old, to be growing “close against the sky”. Yes! the reception of theory, of hypothesis, of beliefs, did depend a great deal on temperament. They were, so to speak, mere equivalents of temperament. A celestial ladder, a ladder from heaven to earth: that was the assumption which the experience of Apuleius had suggested to him: it was what, in different forms, certain persons in every age had instinctively supposed: they would be glad to find their supposition accredited by the authority of a grave philosophy. Marius, however, yearning not less than they, in that hard world of Rome, and below its unpeopled sky, for the trace of some celestial wing across it, must still object that they assumed the thing with too much facility, too much of self-complacency. And his second thought was, that to indulge but for an hour fantasies, fantastic visions of that sort, only left the actual world more lonely than ever. For him certainly, and for his solace, the little godship for whom the rude countryman, an unconscious Platonist, trimmed his twinkling lamp, would never slip from the bark of these immemorial olive-trees.—No! not even in the wildest moonlight. For himself, it was clear, he must still hold by what his eyes really saw. Only, he had to concede also, that the very boldness of such theory bore witness, at least, to a variety of human

disposition and a consequent variety of mental view, which might—who could tell?—be correspondent to, be defined by and define, varieties of facts, of truths, just “behind the veil”, regarding the world all alike had actually before them as their original premiss or starting-point; a world, wider, perhaps, in its possibilities, than all possible fancies concerning it.

CHAPTER XXI

TWO CURIOUS HOUSES

II. THE CHURCH IN CECILIA'S HOUSE

“Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.”

CORNELIUS had certain friends in or near Rome, whose household, to Marius, as he pondered now and again what might be the determining influences of that peculiar character, presented itself as possibly its main secret—the hidden source from which the beauty and strength of a nature, so persistently fresh in the midst of a somewhat jaded world, might be derived. But Marius had never yet seen these friends; and it was almost by accident that the veil of reserve was at last lifted, and, with strange contrast to his visit to the poet's villa at Tusculum, he entered another curious house.

“The house in which she lives,” says the mystical German writer quoted once before, “is for the orderly soul, which does not live on blindly before her, but is ever, out of her passing experiences, building and adorning the parts of a many-roomed abode for herself, only an expansion of the body; as the body, according to the philosophy of Swedenborg, is but a process, an expansion, of the soul. For such an orderly soul, as life proceeds, all sorts of delicate affinities establish themselves, between herself and the doors and passage-ways, the lights and shadows, of her outward dwelling-place, until she may seem incorporate with it—until at last, in the entire expressiveness of what is outward, there is for her, to speak properly, between outward and inward, no longer any distinction at all; and the light which creeps at a particular hour on a particular picture or space upon the wall, the scent of flowers in the air at a particular window, become to her, not so much apprehended objects, as themselves powers of apprehension and doorways to things beyond—the germ or rudiment of certain new faculties, by which she, dimly yet surely, apprehends a matter lying beyond her actually attained capacities of spirit and sense.”

So it must needs be in a world which is itself, we may think, together with that bodily "tent" or "tabernacle", only one of many vestures for the clothing of the pilgrim soul, to be left by her, surely, as if on the wayside, worn-out one by one, as it was from her, indeed, they borrowed what momentary value or significance they had.

The two friends were returning to Rome from a visit to a country-house, where again a mixed company of guests had been assembled; Marius, for his part, a little weary of gossip, and those sparks of ill-tempered rivalry, which would seem sometimes to be the only sort of fire the intercourse of people in general society can strike out of them. A mere reaction upon this, as they started in the clear morning, made their companionship, at least for one of them, hardly less tranquillising than the solitude he so much valued. Something in the south-west wind, combining with their own intention, favoured increasingly, as the hours wore on, a serenity like that Marius had felt once before in journeying over the great plain towards Tibur—a serenity that was to-day brotherly amity also, and seemed to draw into its own charmed circle whatever was then present to eye or ear, while they talked or were silent together, and all petty irritations, and the like, shrank out of existence, or kept certainly beyond its limits. The natural fatigue of the long journey overcame them quite suddenly at last, when they were still about two miles distant from Rome. The seemingly endless line of tombs and cypresses had been visible for hours against the sky towards the west; and it was just where a cross-road from the *Latin Way* fell into the *Appian*, that Cornelius halted at a doorway in a long, low wall—the outer wall of some villa courtyard, it might be supposed—as if at liberty to enter, and rest there awhile. He held the door open for his companion to enter also, if he would; with an expression, as he lifted the latch, which seemed to ask Marius, apparently shrinking from a possible intrusion: "Would you like to see it?" Was he willing to look upon that, the seeing of which might define—yes! define the critical turning-point in his days?

The little doorway in this long, low wall admitted them, in fact, into the court or garden of a villa, disposed in one of those abrupt natural hollows, which give its character to the country in this place; the house itself, with all its dependent buildings, the spaciousness of which surprised Marius as he entered, being thus wholly concealed from passengers along the road. All around, in those well-ordered precincts, were the quiet signs of wealth, and of a nobler taste—a taste, indeed, chiefly evidenced in the selection and juxtaposition of the material it had to deal with, consisting almost exclusively of the remains of older art, here arranged and harmonised, with effects, both as regards colour and form, so delicate as to seem really derivative

from some finer intelligence in these matters than lay within the resources of the ancient world. It was the old way of true *Renaissance*—being indeed the way of nature with her roses, the divine way with the body of man, perhaps with his soul—conceiving the new organism by no sudden and abrupt creation, but rather by the action of a new principle upon elements, all of which had in truth already lived and died many times. The fragments of older architecture, the mosaics, the spiral columns, the precious corner-stones of immemorial building, had put on, by such juxtaposition, a new and singular expressiveness, an air of grave thought, of an intellectual purpose, in itself, æsthetically, very seductive. Lastly, herb and tree had taken possession, spreading their seed-bells and light branches, just astir in the trembling air, above the ancient garden-wall, against the wide realms of sunset. And from the first they could hear singing, the singing of children mainly, it would seem, and of a new kind; so novel indeed in its effect, as to bring suddenly to the recollection of Marius, Flavian's early essays towards a new world of poetic sound. It was the expression not altogether of mirth, yet of some wonderful sort of happiness—the blithe self-expansion of a joyful soul in people upon whom some all-subduing experience had wrought heroically, and who still remembered, on this bland afternoon, the hour of a great deliverance.

His old native susceptibility to the spirit, the special sympathies, of places,—above all, to any hieratic or religious significance they might have,—was at its liveliest, as Marius, still encompassed by that peculiar singing, and still amid the evidences of a grave discretion all around him, passed into the house. That intelligent seriousness about life, the absence of which had ever seemed to remove those who lacked it into some strange species wholly alien from himself, accumulating all the lessons of his experience since those first days at White-nights, was as it were translated here, as if in designed congruity with his favourite precepts of the power of physical vision, into an actual picture. If the true value of souls is in proportion to what they can admire, Marius was just then an acceptable soul. As he passed through the various chambers, great and small, one dominant thought increased upon him, the thought of chaste women and their children—of all the various affections of family life under its most natural conditions, yet developed, as if in devout imitation of some sublime new type of it, into large controlling passions. There reigned throughout, an order and purity, and orderly disposition, as if by way of making ready for some gracious spousals. The place itself was like a bride adorned for her husband; and its singular cheerfulness, the abundant light everywhere, the sense of peaceful industry, of which he received a deep impression though without precisely reckoning

wherein it resided, as he moved on rapidly, were in forcible contrast just at first to the place to which he was next conducted by Cornelius still with a sort of eager, hurried, half-troubled reluctance, and as if he forbore the explanation which might well be looked for by his companion.

An old flower-garden in the rear of the house, set here and there with a venerable olive-tree—a picture in pensive shade and fiery blossom, as transparent, under that afternoon light, as the old miniature-painters' work on the walls of the chambers within—was bounded towards the west by a low, grass-grown hill. A narrow opening cut in its steep side, like a solid blackness there, admitted Marius and his gleaming leader into a hollow cavern or crypt, neither more nor less in fact than the family burial-place of the Cecillii, to whom this residence belonged, brought thus, after an arrangement then becoming not unusual, into immediate connexion with the abode of the living, in bold assertion of that instinct of family life, which the sanction of the *Holy Family* was, hereafter, more and more to reinforce. Here, in truth, was the centre of the peculiar religious expressiveness, of the sanctity, of the entire scene. That "any person may, at his own election, constitute the place which belongs to him a *religious* place, by the carrying of his dead into it":—had been a maxim of old Roman law, which it was reserved for the early Christian societies, like that established here by the piety of a wealthy Roman matron, to realise in all its consequences. Yet this was certainly unlike any cemetery Marius had ever before seen; most obviously in this, that these people had returned to the older fashion of disposing of their dead by burial instead of burning. Originally a family sepulchre, it was growing to a vast *necropolis*, a whole township of the deceased, by means of some free expansion of the family interest beyond its amplest natural limits. That air of venerable beauty which characterised the house and its precincts above, was maintained also here. It was certainly with a great outlay of labour that these long, apparently endless, yet elaborately designed galleries, were increasing so rapidly, with their layers of beds or berths, one above another, cut, on either side the pathway, in the porous *tufa*, through which all the moisture filters downwards, leaving the parts above dry and wholesome. All alike were carefully closed, and with all the delicate costliness at command; some with simple tiles of baked clay, many with slabs of marble, enriched by fair inscriptions: marble taken, in some cases, from older pagan tombs—the inscription sometimes a *palimpsest*, the new epitaph being woven into the faded letters of an earlier one.

As in an ordinary Roman cemetery, an abundance of utensils for the worship or commemoration of the departed was disposed around—

incense, lights, flowers, their flame or their freshness being relieved to the utmost by contrast with the coal-like blackness of the soil itself, a volcanic sandstone, cinder of burnt-out fires. Would they ever kindle again?—possess, transform, the place?—Turning to an ashen pallor where, at regular intervals, an air-hole or *luminare* let in a hard beam of clear but sunless light, with the heavy sleepers, row upon row within, leaving a passage so narrow that only one visitor at a time could move along, cheek to cheek with them, the high walls seemed to shut one in into the great company of the dead. Only the long straight pathway lay before him; opening, however, here and there, into a small chamber, around a broad, table-like coffin or “altar-tomb”, adorned even more profusely than the rest as if for some anniversary observance. Clearly, these people, concurring in this with the special sympathies of Marius himself, had adopted the practice of burial from some peculiar feeling of hope they entertained concerning the body; a feeling which, in no irreverent curiosity, he would fain have penetrated. The complete and irreparable disappearance of the dead in the funeral fire, so crushing to the spirits, as he for one had found it, had long since induced in him a preference for that other mode of settlement to the last sleep, as having something about it more homelike and hopeful, at least in outward seeming. But whence the strange confidence that these “handfuls of white dust” would hereafter re-compose themselves once more into exulting human creatures? By what heavenly alchemy, what reviving dew from above, such as was certainly never again to reach the dead violets?—*Januarius, Agapetus, Felicitas; Martyrs! refresh, I pray you, the soul of Cecil, of Cornelius!* said an inscription, one of many, scratched, like a passing sigh, when it was still fresh in the mortar that had closed up the prison-door. All critical estimate of this bold hope, as sincere apparently as it was audacious in its claim, being set aside, here at least, carried further than ever before, was that pious, systematic commemoration of the dead, which, in its chivalrous refusal to forget or finally desert the helpless, had ever counted with Marius as the central exponent or symbol of all natural duty.

The stern soul of the excellent Jonathan Edwards, applying the faulty theology of John Calvin, afforded him, we know, the vision of infants not a span long, on the floor of hell. Every visitor to the Catacombs must have observed, in a very different theological connexion, the numerous children’s graves there—beds of infants, but a span long indeed, lowly “prisoners of hope”, on these sacred floors. It was with great curiosity, certainly, that Marius considered them, decked in some instances with the favourite toys of their tiny occupants—toy-soldiers, little chariot-wheels, the entire paraphernalia of a baby-

house; and when he saw afterwards the living children, who sang and were busy above—sang their psalm *Laudate Pueri Dominum!*—their very faces caught for him a sort of quaint unreality from the memory of those others, the children of the Catacombs, but a little way below them.

Here and there, mingling with the record of merely natural decease, and sometimes even at these children's graves, were the signs of violent death or "martyrdom",—proofs that some "had loved not their lives unto the death"—in the little red phial of blood, the palm-branch, the red flowers for their heavenly "birthday". About one sepulchre in particular, distinguished in this way, and devoutly arrayed for what, by a bold paradox, was thus treated as, *natalitia*—a birthday, the peculiar arrangements of the whole place visibly centred. And it was with a singular novelty of feeling, like the dawning of a fresh order of experiences upon him, that, standing beside those mournful relics, snatched in haste from the common place of execution not many years before, Marius became, as by some gleam of foresight, aware of the whole force of evidence for a certain strange, new hope, defining in its turn some new and weighty motive of action, which lay in deaths so tragic for the "Christian superstition". Something of them he had heard indeed already. They had seemed to him but one savagery the more, savagery self-provoked, in a cruel and stupid world.

And yet these poignant memorials seemed also to draw him onwards to-day, as if towards an image of some still more pathetic suffering, in the remote background. Yes! the interest, the expression, of the entire neighbourhood was instinct with it, as with the savour of some priceless incense. Penetrating the whole atmosphere, touching everything around with its peculiar sentiment, it seemed to make all this visible mortality, death's very self—Ah! lovelier than any fable of old mythology had ever thought to render it, in the utmost limits of fantasy; and this, in simple candour of feeling about a supposed fact. *Peace! Pax! Pax tecum!*—the word, the thought—was put forth everywhere, with images of hope, snatched sometimes from that jaded pagan world which had really afforded men so little of it from first to last; the various consoling images it had thrown off, of succour, of regeneration, of escape from the grave—Hercules wrestling with Death for possession of Alceste, Orpheus taming the wild beasts, the Shepherd with his sheep, the Shepherd carrying the sick lamb upon his shoulders. Yet these imageries after all, it must be confessed, formed but a slight contribution to the dominant effect of tranquil hope there—a kind of heroic cheerfulness and grateful expansion of heart, as with the sense, again, of some real deliverance, which seemed

to deepen the longer one lingered through these strange and awful passages. A figure, partly pagan in character, yet most frequently repeated of all these visible parables—the figure of one just escaped from the sea, still clinging as the life to the shore in surprised joy, together with the inscription beneath it, seemed best to express the prevailing sentiment of the place. And it was just as he had puzzled out this inscription—

*I went down to the bottom of the mountains:
The earth with her bars was about me for ever:
Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption!*

—that with no feeling of suddenness or change Marius found himself emerging again, like a later mystic traveller through similar dark places “quieted by hope”, into the daylight.

They were still within the precincts of the house, still in possession of that wonderful singing, although almost in the open country, with a great view of the *Campagna* before them, and the hills beyond. The orchard or meadow, through which their path lay, was already gray with twilight, though the western sky, where the greater stars were visible, was still afloat in crimson splendour. The colour of all earthly things seemed repressed by the contrast, yet with a sense of great richness lingering in their shadows. At that moment the voice of the singers, a “voice of joy and health”, concentrated itself with solemn antistrophic movement, into an evening, or “candle” hymn.

“Hail! Heavenly Light, from his pure glory poured,
Who is the Almighty Father, heavenly, blest:—
Worthiest art Thou, at all times to be sung
With undefiled tongue.”—

It was like the evening itself made audible, its hopes and fears, with the stars shining in the midst of it. Half above, half below the level white mist, dividing the light from the darkness, came now the mistress of this place, the wealthy Roman matron, left early a widow a few years before, by Cecilius “Confessor and Saint”. With a certain antique severity in the gathering of the long mantle, and with coif or veil folded decorously below the chin, “gray within gray”, to the mind of Marius her temperate beauty brought reminiscences of the serious and virile character of the best female statuary of Greece. Quite foreign, however, to any Greek statuary was the expression of pathetic care, with which she carried a little child at rest in her arms. Another, a year or two older, walked beside, the fingers of one

hand within her girdle. She paused for a moment with a greeting for Cornelius.

That visionary scene was the close, the fitting close, of the afternoon's strange experiences. A few minutes later, passing forward on his way along the public road, he could have fancied it a dream. The house of Cecilia grouped itself beside that other curious house he had lately visited at Tusculum. And what a contrast was presented by the former, in its suggestions of hopeful industry, of immaculate cleanness, of responsive affection!—all alike determined by that transporting discovery of some fact, or series of facts, in which the old puzzle of life had found its solution. In truth, one of his most characteristic and constant traits had ever been a certain longing for escape—for some sudden, relieving interchange, across the very spaces of life, it might be, along which he had lingered most pleasantly—for a lifting, from time to time, of the actual horizon. It was like the necessity under which the painter finds himself, to set a window or open doorway in the background of his picture; or like a sick man's longing for northern coolness, and the whispering willow-trees, amid the breathless evergreen forests of the south. To some such effect had this visit occurred to him, and through so slight an accident. Rome and Roman life, just then, were come to seem like some stifling forest of bronze-work, transformed, as if by malign enchantment, out of the generations of living trees, yet with roots in a deep, down-trodden soil of poignant human susceptibilities. In the midst of its suffocation, that old longing for escape had been satisfied by this vision of the church in Cecilia's house, as never before. It was still, indeed, according to the unchangeable law of his temperament, to the eye, to the visual faculty of mind, that those experiences appealed—the peaceful light and shade, the boys whose very faces seemed to sing, the virginal beauty of the mother and her children. But, in his case, what was thus visible constituted a moral or spiritual influence, of a somewhat exigent and controlling character, added anew to life, a new element therein, with which, consistently with his own chosen maxim, he must make terms.

The thirst for every kind of experience, encouraged by a philosophy which taught that nothing was intrinsically great or small, good or evil, had ever been at strife in him with a hieratic refinement, in which the boy-priest survived, prompting always the selection of what was perfect of its kind, with subsequent loyal adherence of his soul thereto. This had carried him along in a continuous communion with ideals, certainly realised in part, either in the conditions of his own being, or in the actual company about him, above all, in Cornelius. Surely, in this strange new society he had touched upon for the first time to-day—

in this strange family, like "a garden enclosed"—was the fulfilment of all the preferences, the judgments, of that half-understood friend, which of late years had been his protection so often amid the perplexities of life. Here, it might be, was, if not the cure, yet the solace or anodyne of his great sorrows—of that constitutional sorrowfulness, not peculiar to himself perhaps, but which had made his life certainly like one long "disease of the spirit". Merciful intention made itself known remedially here, in the mere contact of the air, like a soft touch upon aching flesh. On the other hand, he was aware that new responsibilities also might be awakened—new and untried responsibilities—a demand for something from him in return. Might this new vision, like the malignant beauty of pagan Medusa, be exclusive of any admiring gaze upon anything but itself? At least he suspected that, after the beholding of it, he could never again be altogether as he had been before.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE MINOR PEACE OF THE CHURCH"

FAITHFUL to the spirit of his early Epicurean philosophy and the impulse to surrender himself, in perfectly liberal inquiry about it, to anything that, as a matter of fact, attracted or impressed him strongly, Marius informed himself with much pains concerning the church in Cecilia's house; inclining at first to explain the peculiarities of that place by the establishment there of the *schola* or common hall of one of those burial-guilds, which then covered so much of the unofficial, and, as it might be called, subterranean enterprise of Roman society. And what he found, thus looking, literally, for the dead among the living, was the vision of a natural, a scrupulously natural, love, transforming, by some new gift of insight into the truth of human relationships, and under the urgency of some new motive by him so far unfathomable, all the conditions of life. He saw, in all its primitive freshness and amid the lively facts of its actual coming into the world, as a reality of experience, that regenerate type of humanity, which, centuries later, Giotto and his successors, down to the best and purest days of the young Raphael, working under conditions very friendly to the imagination, were to conceive as an artistic ideal. He felt there, felt amid the stirring of some wonderful new hope within himself, the genius, the unique power of Christianity; in exercise then, as it has been exercised ever since, in spite of many hindrances, and under the most inopportune circumstances. Chastity,—as he seemed to

understand—the chastity of men and women, amid all the conditions, and with the results, proper to such chastity, is the most beautiful thing in the world and the truest conservation of that creative energy by which men and women were first brought into it. The nature of the family, for which the better genius of old Rome itself had sincerely cared, of the family and its appropriate affections—all that love of one's kindred by which obviously one does triumph in some degree over death—had never been so felt before. Here, surely! in its genial warmth, its jealous exclusion of all that was opposed to it, to its own immaculate naturalness, in the hedge set around the sacred thing on every side, this development of the family did but carry forward, and give effect to, the purposes, the kindness, of nature itself, friendly to man. As if by way of a due recognition of some immeasurable divine condescension manifest in a certain historic fact, its influence was felt more especially at those points which demanded some sacrifice of one's self, for the weak, for the aged, for little children, and even for the dead. And then, for its constant outward token, its significant manner or index, it issued in a certain debonair grace, and a certain mystic attractiveness, a courtesy, which made Marius doubt whether that famed Greek "blitheness", or gaiety, or grace, in the handling of life, had been, after all, an unrivalled success. Contrasting with the incurable insipidity even of what was most exquisite in the higher Roman life, of what was still truest to the primitive soul of goodness amid its evil, the new creation he now looked on—as it were a picture beyond the craft of any master of old pagan beauty—had indeed all the appropriate freshness of a "bride adorned for her husband". Things new and old seemed to be coming as if out of some goodly treasure-house, the brain full of science, the heart rich with various sentiment, possessing withal this surprising healthfulness, this reality of heart.

"You would hardly believe," writes Pliny—to his own wife!—"what a longing for you possesses me. Habit—that we have not been used to be apart—adds herein to the primary force of affection. It is this keeps me awake at night fancying I see you beside me. That is why my feet take me unconsciously to your sitting-room at those hours when I was wont to visit you there. That is why I turn from the door of the empty chamber, sad and ill-at-ease, like an excluded lover."—

There, is a real idyll from that family life, the protection of which had been the motive of so large a part of the religion of the Romans, still surviving among them; as it survived also in Aurelius, his disposition and aims, and, spite of slanderous tongues, in the attained sweetness of his interior life. What Marius had been permitted to

see was a realisation of such life higher still: and with—Yes! with a more effective sanction and motive than it had ever possessed before, in that fact, or series of facts, to be ascertained by those who would.

The central glory of the reign of the Antonines was that society had attained in it, though very imperfectly, and for the most part by cumbrous effort of law, many of those ends to which Christianity went straight, with the sufficiency, the success, of a direct and appropriate instinct. Pagan Rome, too, had its touching charity-sermons on occasions of great public distress; its charity-children in long file, in memory of the elder empress Faustina; its prototype under patronage of Aesculapius, of the modern hospital for the sick on the island of Saint Bartholomew. But what pagan charity was doing tardily, and as if with the painful calculation of old age, the church was doing, almost without thinking about it, with all the liberal enterprise of youth, because it was her very being thus to do. "You fail to realise your own good intentions," she seems to say, to pagan virtue, pagan kindness. She identified herself with those intentions and advanced them with an unparalleled freedom and largeness. The gentle Seneca would have reverent burial provided even for the dead body of a criminal. Yet when a certain woman collected for interment the insulted remains of Nero, the pagan world surmised that she must be a Christian: only a Christian would have been likely to conceive so chivalrous a devotion towards mere wretchedness. "We refuse to be witnesses even of a homicide commanded by the law," boasts the dainty conscience of a Christian apologist, "we take no part in your cruel sports nor in the spectacles of the amphitheatre, and we hold that to witness a murder is the same thing as to commit one." And there was another duty almost forgotten, the sense of which Rousseau brought back to the degenerate society of a later age. In an impassioned discourse the sophist Favorinus counsels mothers to suckle their own infants; and there are Roman epitaphs erected to mothers, which gratefully record this proof of natural affection as a thing then unusual. In this matter too, what a sanction, what a provocative to natural duty, lay in that image discovered to Augustus by the Tiburtine Sibyl, amid the aurora of a new age, the image of the Divine Mother and the Child, just then rising upon the world like the dawn!

Christian belief, again, had presented itself as a great inspirer of chastity. Chastity, in turn, realised in the whole scope of its conditions, fortified that rehabilitation of peaceful labour, after the mind, the pattern, of the workman of Galilee which was another of the natural instincts of the catholic church, as being indeed the long-desired initiator of a religion of cheerfulness, as a true lover of

the industry—so to term it—the labour, the creation, of God.

And this severe yet genial assertion of the ideal of woman, of the family, of industry, of man's work in life, so close to the truth of nature, was also, in that charmed hour of the minor "Peace of the church", realised as an influence tending to beauty, to the adornment of life and the world. The sword in the world, the right eye plucked out, the right hand cut off, the spirit of reproach which those images express, and of which monasticism is the fulfilment, reflect one side only of the nature of the divine missionary of the New Testament. Opposed to, yet blent with, this ascetic or militant character, is the function of the Good Shepherd, serene, blithe and debonair, beyond the gentlest shepherd of Greek mythology; of a king under whom the beatific vision is realised of a reign of peace—peace of heart—among men. Such aspect of the divine character of Christ, rightly understood, is indeed the final consummation of that bold and brilliant hopefulness in man's nature, which had sustained him so far through his immense labours, his immense sorrows, and of which pagan gaiety in the handling of life, is but a minor achievement. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, of those two contrasted aspects of its Founder, have, in different ages and under the urgency of different human needs, been at work also in the Christian Church. Certainly, in that brief "Peace of the church" under the Antonines, the spirit of a pastoral security and happiness seems to have been largely expanded. There, in the early church of Rome, was to be seen, and on sufficiently reasonable grounds, that satisfaction and serenity on a dispassionate survey of the facts of life, which all hearts had desired, though for the most part in vain, contrasting itself for Marius, in particular, very forcibly, with the imperial philosopher's so heavy burden of unrelieved melancholy. It was Christianity in its humanity, or even its humanism, in its generous hopes for man, its common sense and alacrity of cheerful service, its sympathy with all creatures, its appreciation of beauty and daylight.

"The angel of righteousness," says the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the most characteristic religious book of that age, its *Pilgrim's Progress*—"the angel of righteousness is modest and delicate and meek and quiet. Take from thyself grief, for (as Hamlet will one day discover) 'tis the sister of doubt and ill-temper. Grief is more evil than any other spirit of evil, and is most dreadful to the servants of God, and beyond all spirits destroyeth man. For, as when good news is come to one in grief, straightway he forgetteth his former grief, and no longer attendeth to anything except the good news which he hath heard, so do ye, also, having received a renewal of your soul through the beholding of these good things. Put on therefore gladness that

hath always favour before God, and is acceptable unto Him, and delight thyself in it; for every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts, despising grief."—Such were the commonplaces of this new people, among whom so much of what Marius had valued most in the old world seemed to be under renewal and further promotion. Some transforming spirit was at work to harmonise contrasts, to deepen expression—a spirit which, in its dealing with the elements of ancient life, was guided by a wonderful tact of selection, exclusion, juxtaposition, begetting thereby a unique effect of freshness, a grave yet wholesome beauty, because the world of sense, the whole outward world was understood to set forth the veritable unction and royalty of a certain priesthood and kingship of the soul within, among the prerogatives of which was a delightful sense of freedom.

The reader may think perhaps, that Marius, who, Epicurean as he was, had his visionary aptitudes, by an inversion of one of Plato's peculiarities with which he was of course familiar, must have descended, by *foresight*, upon a later age than his own, and anticipated Christian poetry and art as they came to be under the influence of Saint Francis of Assisi. But if he dreamed on one of those nights of the beautiful house of Cecilia, its lights and flowers, of Cecilia herself moving among the lilies, with an enhanced grace as happens sometimes in healthy dreams, it was indeed hardly an anticipation. He had lighted, by one of the peculiar intellectual good-fortunes of his life, upon a period when, even more than in the days of austere *ascēsis* which had preceded and were to follow it, the church was true for a moment, truer perhaps than she would ever be again, to that element of profound serenity in the soul of her Founder, which reflected the eternal goodwill of God to man, "in whom," according to the oldest version of the angelic message, "He is well-pleased."

For what Christianity did many centuries afterwards in the way of informing an art, a poetry, of graver and higher beauty, we may think, than that of Greek art and poetry at their best, was in truth conformable to the original tendency of its genius. The genuine capacity of the catholic church in this direction, discoverable from the first in the New Testament, was also really at work, in that earlier "Peace", under the Antonines—the minor "Peace of the church", as we might call it, in distinction from the final "Peace of the church", commonly so called, under Constantine. Saint Francis, with his following in the sphere of poetry and of the arts—the voice of Dante, the hand of Giotto—giving visible feature and colour, and a palpable place among men, to the regenerate race, did but re-establish a continuity, only suspended in part by those troublous intervening

centuries—the “dark ages”, properly thus named—with the gracious spirit of the primitive church, as manifested in that first early spring-tide of her success. The greater “Peace” of Constantine, on the other hand, in many ways, does but establish the exclusiveness, the puritanism, the ascetic gloom which, in the period between Aurelius and the first Christian emperor, characterised a church under misunderstanding or oppression, driven back, in a world of tasteless controversy, inwards upon herself.

Already, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, the time was gone by when men became Christians under some sudden and overpowering impression, and with all the disturbing results of such a crisis. At this period the larger number, perhaps, had been born Christians, had been ever with peaceful hearts in their “Father’s house”. That earlier belief in the speedy coming of judgment and of the end of the world, with the consequences it so naturally involved in the temper of men’s minds, was dying out. Every day the contrast between the church and the world was becoming less pronounced. And now also, as the church rested awhile from opposition, that rapid self-development outward from within, proper to times of peace, was in progress. Antoninus Pius, it might seem, more truly even than Marcus Aurelius himself, was of that group of pagan saints for whom Dante, like Augustine, has provided in his scheme of the house with many mansions. A sincere old Roman piety had urged his fortunately constituted nature to no mistakes, no offences against humanity. And of his entire freedom from guile one reward had been this singular happiness, that under his rule there was no shedding of Christian blood. To him belonged that half-humorous placidity of soul, of a kind illustrated later very effectively by Montaigne, which, starting with an instinct of mere fairness towards human nature and the world, seems at last actually to qualify its possessor to be almost the friend of the people of Christ. Amiable, in its own nature, and full of a reasonable gaiety, Christianity has often had its advantage of characters such as that. The geniality of Antoninus Pius, like the geniality of the earth itself, had permitted the church, as being in truth no alien from that old mother earth, to expand and thrive for a season as by natural process. And that charmed period under the Antonines, extending to the later years of the reign of Aurelius (beautiful, brief, chapter of ecclesiastical history!), contains, as one of its motives of interest, the earliest development of Christian ritual under the presidency of the church of Rome.

Again as in one of those mystical, quaint visions of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, “the aged woman was become by degrees more and more youthful. And in the third vision she was quite young, and radiant

with beauty: only her hair was that of an aged woman. And at the last she was joyous, and seated upon a throne—seated upon a throne, because her position is a strong one.” The subterranean worship of the church belonged properly to those years of her early history in which it was illegal for her to worship at all. But, hiding herself for awhile as conflict grew violent, she resumed, when there was felt to be no more than ordinary risk her natural freedom. And the kind of outward prosperity she was enjoying in those moments of her first “Peace”, her modes of worship now blossoming freely above-ground, was re-inforced by the decision at this point of a crisis in her internal history.

In the history of the church, as throughout the moral history of mankind, there are two distinct ideals, either of which it is possible to maintain—two conceptions, under one or the other of which we may represent to ourselves men’s efforts towards a better life—corresponding to those two contrasted aspects, noted above, as discernible in the picture afforded by the New Testament itself of the character of Christ. The ideal of asceticism represents more effort as essentially a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one part of human nature to another, that it may live the more completely in what survives of it; while the ideal of culture represents it as a harmonious development of all the parts of human nature, in just proportion to each other. It was to the latter order of ideas that the church, and especially the church of Rome in the age of the Antonines, freely lent herself. In that earlier “Peace” she had set up for herself the ideal of spiritual development, under the guidance of an instinct by which, in those serene moments, she was absolutely true to the peaceful soul of her Founder. “Goodwill to men,” she said, “in whom God Himself is well-pleased!” For a little while, at least, there was no forced opposition between the soul and the body, the world and the spirit, and the grace of graciousness itself was pre-eminently with the people of Christ. Tact, good sense, ever the note of a true orthodoxy, the merciful compromises of the church, indicative of her imperial vocation in regard to all the varieties of human kind, with a universality of which the old Roman pastorship she was superseding is but a prototype, was already become conspicuous, in spite of a discredited, irritating, vindictive society, all around her.

Against that divine urbanity and moderation the old error of Montanus we read of dimly, was a fanatical revolt—sour, falsely anti-mundane, ever with an air of ascetic affectation, and a bigoted distaste in particular for all the peculiar graces of womanhood. By it the desire to please was understood to come of the author of evil. In this interval of quietness, it was perhaps inevitable, by the law of

reaction, that some such extravagances of the religious temper should arise. But again the church of Rome, now becoming every day more and more completely the capital of the Christian world, checked the nascent Montanism, or puritanism of the moment, vindicating for all Christian people a cheerful liberty of heart, against many a narrow group of sectaries, all alike, in their different ways, accusers of the genial creation of God. With her full, fresh faith in the *Evangele*—in a veritable regeneration of the earth and the body, in the dignity of man's entire personal being—for a season, at least, at that critical period in the development of Christianity, she was for reason, for common sense, for fairness to human nature, and, generally, for what may be called the naturalness of Christianity.—As also for its comely order: she would be “brought to her king in raiment of needlework”. It was by the bishops of Rome, diligently transforming themselves, in the true catholic sense, into universal pastors, that the path of what we must call humanism was thus defined.

And then, in this hour of expansion, as if now at last the catholic church might venture to show her outward lineaments as they really were, worship—“the beauty of holiness”, nay! the elegance of sanctity—was developed, with a bold and confident gladness, the like of which has hardly been the ideal of worship in any later age. The tables in fact were turned: the prize of a cheerful temper on a candid survey of life was no longer with the pagan world. The æsthetic charm of the catholic church, her evocative power over all that is eloquent and expressive in the better mind of man, her outward comeliness, her dignifying convictions about human nature:—all this, as abundantly realised centuries later by Dante and Giotto, by the great medieval church-builders, by the great ritualists like Saint Gregory, and the masters of sacred music in the middle age—we may see already, in dim anticipation, in those charmed moments towards the end of the second century. Dissipated or turned aside, partly through the fatal mistake of Marcus Aurelius himself, for a brief space of time we may discern that influence clearly predominant there. What might seem harsh as dogma was already justifying itself as worship; according to the sound rule: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*—Our Creeds are but the brief abstract of our prayer and song.

The wonderful liturgical spirit of the church, her wholly unparalleled genius for worship, being thus awake, she was rapidly re-organising both pagan and Jewish elements of ritual, for the expanding therein of her own new heart of devotion. Like the institutions of monasticism, like the Gothic style of architecture, the ritual system of the church, as we see it in historic retrospect, ranks as one of the great, conjoint, and (so to term them) *necessary*, products of

human mind. Destined for ages to come, to direct with so deep a fascination men's religious instincts, it was then already recognisable as a new and precious fact in the sum of things. What has been on the whole the method of the church, as "a power of sweetness and patience", in dealing with matters like pagan art, pagan literature was even then manifest; and has the character of the moderation, the divine moderation of Christ himself. It was only among the ignorant, indeed, only in the "villages", that Christianity, even in conscious triumph over paganism, was really betrayed into iconoclasm. In the final "Peace" of the Church under Constantine, while there was plenty of destructive fanaticism in the country, the revolution was accomplished in the larger towns, in a manner more orderly and discreet—in the Roman manner. The faithful were bent less on the destruction of the old pagan temples than on their conversion to a new and higher use; and, with much beautiful furniture ready to hand, they became Christian sanctuaries.

Already, in accordance with such maturer wisdom, the church of the "Minor Peace" had adopted many of the graces of pagan feeling and pagan custom; as being indeed a living creature, taking up, transforming, accommodating still more closely to the human heart what of right belonged to it. In this way an obscure synagogue was expanded into the catholic church. Gathering, from a richer and more varied field of sound than had remained for him, those old Roman harmonies, some notes of which Gregory the Great, centuries later, and after generations of interrupted development, formed into the Gregorian music, she was already, as we have heard, the house of song—of a wonderful new music and poesy. As if in anticipation of the sixteenth century, the church was becoming "humanistic", in an earlier, and unimpeachable *Renaissance*. Singing there had been in abundance from the first; though often it dared only be "of the heart". And it burst forth, when it might, into the beginnings of a true ecclesiastical music; the Jewish psalter, inherited from the synagogue, turning now, gradually, from Greek into Latin—broken Latin, into Italian, as the ritual use of the rich, fresh, expressive vernacular superseded the earlier authorised language of the Church. Through certain surviving remnants of Greek in the later Latin liturgies, we may still discern a highly interesting intermediate phase of ritual development, when the Greek and the Latin were in combination; the poor, surely!—the poor and the children of that liberal Roman church—responding already in their own "vulgar tongue", to an office said in the original, liturgical Greek. That hymn sung in the early morning, of which Pliny had heard, was kindling into the service of the Mass.

The Mass, indeed, would appear to have been said continuously

from the Apostolic age. Its details, as one by one they become visible in later history, have already the character of what is ancient and venerable. "We are very old, and ye are young!" they seem to protest, to those who fail to understand them. Ritual, in fact, like all other elements of religion, must grow and cannot be made—grow by the same law of development which prevails everywhere else, in the moral as in the physical world. As regards this special phase of the religious life, however, such development seems to have been unusually rapid in the subterranean age which preceded Constantine; and in the very first days of the final triumph of the church the Mass emerges to general view already substantially complete. "Wisdom" was dealing, as with the dust of creeds and philosophies, so also with the dust of outworn religious usage, like the very spirit of life itself, organising soul and body out of the lime and clay of the earth. In a generous eclecticism, within the bounds of her liberty, and as by some providential power within her, she gathers and serviceably adopts, as in other matters so in ritual, one thing here, another there, from various sources—Gnostic, Jewish, Pagan—to adorn and beautify the greatest act of worship the world has seen. It was thus the liturgy of the church came to be—full of consolations for the human soul, and destined, surely! one day, under the sanction of so many ages of human experience, to take exclusive possession of the religious consciousness.

TANTUM ERGO SACRAMENTUM
 VENEREMUR CERNUI :
 ET ANTIQUUM DOCUMENTUM
 NOVO CEDAT RITUI.

CHAPTER XXIII

DIVINE SERVICE

"Wisdom hath builded herself a house: she hath mingled her wine; she hath also prepared for herself a table."⁵

THE more highly favoured ages of imaginative art present instances of the summing up of an entire world of complex associations under some single form, like the *Zeus* of Olympia, or the series of frescoes which commemorate *The Acts of Saint Francis*, at Assisi, or like the play of Hamlet or Faust. It was not in an image, or series of images, yet still in a sort of dramatic action, and with the unity of a single

appeal to eye and ear, that Marius about this time found all his new impressions set forth, regarding what he had already recognised, intellectually, as for him at least the most beautiful thing in the world.

To understand the influence upon him of what follows the reader must remember that it was an experience which came amid a deep sense of vacuity in life. The fairest products of the earth seemed to be dropping to pieces, as if in men's very hands, around him. How real was their sorrow, and his! "His observation of life" had come to be like the constant telling of a sorrowful rosary, day after day; till, as if taking infection from the cloudy sorrow of the mind, the eye also, the very senses, were grown faint and sick. And now it happened as with the actual morning on which he found himself a spectator of this new thing. The long winter had been a season of unvarying sullenness. At last, on this day he awoke with a sharp flash of lightning in the earliest twilight: in a little while the heavy rain had filtered the air: the clear light was abroad; and, as though the spring had set in with a sudden leap in the heart of things, the whole scene around him lay like some untarnished picture beneath a sky of delicate blue. Under the spell of his late depression, Marius had suddenly determined to leave Rome for a while. But desiring first to advertise Cornelius of his movements, and failing to find him in his lodgings, he had ventured, still early in the day, to seek him in the Cecilian villa. Passing through its silent and empty court-yard he loitered for a moment, to admire. Under the clear but immature light of winter morning after a storm, all the details of form and colour in the old marbles were distinctly visible, and with a kind of severity or sadness—so it struck him—amid their beauty: in them, and in all other details of the scene—the cypresses, the bunches of pale daffodils in the grass, the curves of the purple hills of Tusculum, with the drifts of virgin snow still lying in their hollows.

The little open door, through which he passed from the court-yard, admitted him into what was plainly the vast *Lararium*, or domestic sanctuary, of the Cecilian family, transformed in many particulars, but still richly decorated, and retaining much of its ancient furniture in metal-work and costly stone. The peculiar half-light of dawn seemed to be lingering beyond its hour upon the solemn marble walls; and here, though at that moment in absolute silence, a great company of people was assembled. In that brief period of peace, during which the church emerged for awhile from her jealously-guarded subterranean life, the rigour of an earlier rule of exclusion had been relaxed. And so it came to pass that, on this morning Marius saw for the first time the wonderful spectacle—wonderful, especially, in its evidential power over himself, over his own thoughts—of those who believe.

There were noticeable, among those present, great varieties of rank, of age, of personal type. The Roman *ingenuus*, with the white toga and gold ring, stood side by side with his slave; and the air of the whole company was, above all, a grave one, an air of recollection. Coming thus unexpectedly upon this large assembly, so entirely united, in a silence so profound, for purposes unknown to him, Marius felt for a moment as if he had stumbled by chance upon some great conspiracy. Yet that could scarcely be, for the people here collected might have figured as the earliest handsel, or pattern, of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed away. Corresponding to the variety of human type there present, was the various expression of every form of human sorrow assuaged. What desire, what fulfilment of desire, had wrought so pathetically on the features of these ranks of aged men and women of humble condition? Those young men, bent down so discreetly on the details of their sacred service, had faced life and were glad, by some science, or light of knowledge they had, to which there had certainly been no parallel in the older world. Was some credible message from beyond "the flaming rampart of the world"—a message of hope, regarding the place of men's souls and their interest in the sum of things—already moulding anew their very bodies, and looks, and voices, now and here? At least, there was a cleansing and kindling flame at work in them, which seemed to make everything else Marius had ever known look comparatively vulgar and mean. There were the children, above all—troops of children—reminding him of those pathetic children's graves, like cradles or garden-beds, he had noticed in his first visit to these places; and they more than satisfied the odd curiosity he had then conceived about them, wondering in what quaintly expressive forms they might come forth into the daylight, if awakened from sleep. Children of the Catacombs, some but "a span long", with features not so much beautiful as heroic (that world of new, refining sentiment having set its seal even on childhood), they retained certainly no stain or trace of anything subterranean this morning, in the alacrity of their worship—as ready as if they had been at play—stretching forth their hands, crying, chanting in a resonant voice, and with boldly upturned faces, *Christe Eleison!*

For the silence—silence, amid those lights of early morning to which Marius had always been constitutionally impressible, as having in them a certain reproachful austerity—was broken suddenly by resounding cries of *Kyrie Eleison! Christe Eleison!* repeated alternately, again and again, until the bishop, rising from his chair, made sign that this prayer should cease. But the voices burst out once more presently, in richer and more varied melody, though still of an antiphonal

character; the men, the women and children, the deacons, the people, answering one another, somewhat after the manner of a Greek chorus. But again with what a novelty of poetic accent; what a genuine expansion of heart; what profound intimations for the intellect, as the meaning of the words grew upon him! *Cum grandi affectu et compunctione dicatur*—says an ancient eucharistic order; and certainly, the mystic tone of this praying and singing was one with the expression of deliverance, of grateful assurance and sincerity, upon the faces of those assembled. As if some searching correction, a regeneration of the body by the spirit, had begun, and was already gone a great way, the countenances of men, women, and children alike had a brightness on them which he could fancy reflected upon himself—an amenity, a mystic amiability and unction, which found its way most readily of all to the hearts of children themselves. The religious poetry of those Hebrew psalms—*Benedixisti Domine terram tuam: Dixit Dominus Domino meo, sede a dextris meis*—was certainly in marvellous accord with the lyrical instinct of his own character. Those august hymns, he thought, must thereafter ever remain by him as among the well-tested powers in things to soothe and fortify the soul. One could never grow tired of them!

In the old pagan worship there had been little to call the understanding into play. Here, on the other hand, the utterance, the eloquence, the music of worship conveyed, as Marius readily understood, a fact or series of facts, for intellectual reception. That became evident, more especially, in those lessons, or sacred readings, which, like the singing, in broken vernacular Latin, occurred at certain intervals, amid the silence of the assembly. There were readings, again with bursts of chanted invocation between for fuller light on a difficult path, in which many a vagrant voice of human philosophy, haunting men's minds from of old, recurred with clearer accent than had ever belonged to it before, as if lifted, above its first intention, into the harmonies of some supreme system of knowledge or doctrine, at length complete. And last of all came a narrative which, with a thousand tender memories, every one appeared to know by heart, displaying, in all the vividness of a picture for the eye, the mournful figure of him towards whom this whole act of worship still consistently turned—a figure which seemed to have absorbed, like some rich tincture in his garment, all that was deep-felt and impassioned in the experiences of the past.

It was the anniversary of his birth as a little child they celebrated to-day. *Asstiterunt reges terra:* so the Gradual, the "Song of Degrees", proceeded, the young men on the steps of the altar responding in deep, clear antiphon or chorus—

Astiterunt reges terræ—
Adversus sanctum puerum tuum, Jesum:
Nunc, Domine, da servis tuis loqui verbum tuum—
Et signa fieri, per nomen sancti pueri Jesu.

And the proper action of the rite itself, like a half-opened book to be read by the duly initiated mind took up those suggestions, and carried them forward into the present, as having reference to a power still efficacious, still after some mystic sense even now in action among the people there assembled. The entire office, indeed, with its interchange of lessons, hymns, prayer, silence, was itself like a single piece of highly composite, dramatic music; a "song of degrees", rising steadily to a climax. Notwithstanding the absence of any central image visible to the eye, the entire ceremonial process, like the place in which it was enacted, was weighty with symbolic significance, seemed to express a single leading motive. The mystery, if such in fact it was, centred indeed in the actions of one visible person, distinguished among the assistants, who stood ranged in semi-circle around him, by the extreme fineness of his white vestments, and the pointed cap with the golden ornaments upon his head.

Nor had Marius ever seen the pontifical character, as he conceived it—*sicut unguentum in capite, descendens in oram vestimenti*—so fully realised, as in the expression, the manner and voice, of this novel pontiff, as he took his seat on the white chair placed for him by the young men, and received his long staff into his hand, or moved his hands—hands which seemed endowed in very deed with some mysterious power—at the *Lavabo*, or at the various benedictions, or to bless certain objects on the table before him, chanting in cadence of a grave sweetness the leading parts of the rite. What profound unction and mysticity! The solemn character of the singing was at its height when he opened his lips. Like some new sort of *rhapsôdos*, it was for the moment as if he alone possessed the words of the office, and they flowed anew from some permanent source of inspiration within him. The table or altar at which he presided, below a canopy on delicate spiral columns, was in fact the tomb of a youthful "witness", of the family of the Cecilii, who had shed his blood not many years before, and whose relics were still in this place. It was for his sake the bishop put his lips so often to the surface before him; the regretful memory of that death entwining itself, though not without certain notes of triumph, as a matter of special inward significance, throughout a service, which was, before all else, from first to last, a commemoration of the dead.

A sacrifice also,—a sacrifice, it might seem, like the most primitive,

the most natural and enduringly significant of old pagan sacrifices, of the simplest fruits of the earth. And in connexion with this circumstance again, as in the actual stones of the building so in the rite itself, what Marius observed was not so much new matter as a new spirit, moulding, informing, with a new intention, many observances not witnessed for the first time to-day. Men and women came to the altar successively, in perfect order, and deposited below the lattice-work of pierced white marble, their baskets of wheat and grapes, incense, oil for the sanctuary lamps; bread and wine especially—pure wheaten bread, the pure white wine of the Tusculan vineyards. There was here a veritable consecration, hopeful and animating, of the earth's gifts, of old dead and dark matter itself, now in some way redeemed at last, of all that we can touch or see, in the midst of a jaded world that had lost the true sense of such things, and in strong contrast to the wise emperor's renunciant and impassive attitude towards them. Certain portions of that bread and wine were taken into the bishop's hands; and thereafter, with an increasing mysticity and effusion the rite proceeded. Still in a strain of inspired supplication, the antiphonal singing developed, from this point, into a kind of dialogue between the chief minister and the whole assisting company—

SURSUM CORDA !

HABEMUS AD DOMINUM.

GRATIAS AGAMUS DOMINO DEO NOSTRO !—

It might have been thought the business, the duty or service of young men more particularly, as they stood there in long ranks, and in severe and simple vesture of the purest white—a service in which they would seem to be flying for refuge, as with their precious, their treacherous and critical youth in their hands, to one—Yes! one like themselves, who yet claimed their worship, a worship, above all, in the way of Aurelius, in the way of imitation. *Adoramus te Christe, quia per crucem tuam redemisti mundum!*—they cry together. So deep is the emotion that at moments it seems to Marius as if some there present apprehend that prayer prevails, that the very object of this pathetic crying himself draws near. From the first there had been the sense, an increasing assurance, of one coming:—actually with them now, according to the oft-repeated affirmation or petition, *Dominus vobiscum!* Some at least were quite sure of it; and the confidence of this remnant fired the hearts, and gave meaning to the bold, ecstatic worship, of all the rest about them.

Prompted especially by the suggestions of that mysterious old Jewish psalmody, so new to him—lesson and hymn—and catching therewith

a portion of the enthusiasm of those beside him, Marius could discern dimly, behind the solemn recitation which now followed, at once a narrative and a prayer, the most touching image truly that had ever come within the scope of his mental or physical gaze. It was the image of a young man giving up voluntarily, one by one, for the greatest of ends, the greatest gifts; actually parting with himself, above all, with the serenity, the divine serenity, of his own soul; yet from the midst of his desolation crying out upon the greatness of his success, as if foreseeing this very worship.* As centre of the supposed facts which for these people were become so constraining a motive of hopefulness, of activity, that image seemed to display itself with an overwhelming claim on human gratitude. What Saint Lewis of France discerned, and found so irresistibly touching, across the dimness of many centuries, as a painful thing done for love of him by one he had never seen, was to them almost as a thing of yesterday; and their hearts were whole with it. It had the force, among their interests, of an almost recent event in the career of one whom their fathers' fathers might have known. From memories so sublime, yet so close at hand, had the narrative descended in which these acts of worship centered; though again the names of some more recently dead were mingled in it. And it seemed as if the very dead were aware; to be stirring beneath the slabs of the sepulchres which lay so near, that they might associate themselves to this enthusiasm—to this exalted worship of Jesus.

One by one, at last, the faithful approach to receive from the chief minister morsels of the great, white, wheaten cake, he had taken into his hands—*Perducat vos ad vitam æternam!* he prays, half-silently, as they depart again, after discreet embraces. The Eucharist of those early days was, even more entirely than at any later or happier time, an act of thanksgiving; and while the remnants of the feast are borne away for the reception of the sick, the sustained gladness of the rite reaches its highest point in the singing of a hymn: a hymn like the spontaneous product of two opposed militant companies, contending accordantly together, heightening, accumulating, their witness, provoking one another's worship, in a kind of sacred rivalry.

Ite! Missa est!—cried the young deacons: and Marius departed from that strange scene along with the rest. What was it?—Was it this made the way of Cornelius so pleasant through the world? As for Marius himself,—the natural soul of worship in him had at last been satisfied as never before. He felt, as he left that place, that he must hereafter experience often a longing memory, a kind of thirst, for all this, over again. And it seemed moreover to define what he

* Psalm xxii. 22-31. [W.P.]

must require of the powers, whatsoever they might be, that had brought him into the world at all, to make him not unhappy in it.

CHAPTER XXIV

A CONVERSATION NOT IMAGINARY

IN cheerfulness is the success of our studies, says Pliny—*studia hilaritate proveniunt*. It was still the habit of Marius, encouraged by his experience that sleep is not only a sedative but the best of stimulants, to seize the morning hours for creation, making profit when he might of the wholesome serenity which followed a dreamless night. "The morning for creation," he would say; "the afternoon for the perfecting labour of the file; the evening for reception—the reception of matter from without one, of other men's words and thoughts—matter for our own dreams, or the merely mechanic exercise of the brain, brooding thereon silently, in its dark chambers." To leave home early in the day was therefore a rare thing for him. He was induced so to do on the occasion of a visit to Rome of the famous writer Lucian, whom he had been bidden to meet. The breakfast over, he walked away with the learned guest, having offered to be his guide to the lecture-room of a well-known Greek rhetorician and expositor of the Stoic philosophy, a teacher then much in fashion among the studious youth of Rome. On reaching the place, however, they found the doors closed, with a slip of writing attached, which proclaimed "a holiday"; and the morning being a fine one, they walked further, along the Appian Way. Mortality, with which the *Queen of Ways*—in reality the favourite cemetery of Rome—was so closely crowded, in every imaginable form of sepulchre, from the tiniest baby-house, to the massive monument out of which the Middle Age would adapt a fortress-tower, might seem, on a morning like this, to be "smiling through tears". The flower-stalls just beyond the city gates presented to view an array of posies and garlands, fresh enough for a wedding. At one and another of them groups of persons, gravely clad, were making their bargains before starting for some perhaps distant spot on the highway, to keep a *dies rosationis*, this being the time of roses, at the grave of a deceased relation. Here and there, a funeral procession was slowly on its way, in weird contrast to the gaiety of the hour.

The two companions, of course, read the epitaphs as they strolled along. In one, reminding them of the poet's—*Si lacrimæ prosunt, visis te ostende videri!*—a woman prayed that her lost husband might visit her dreams. Their characteristic note, indeed, was an imploring cry,

still to be sought after by the living. "While I live," such was the promise of a lover to his dead mistress, "you will receive this homage: after my death,—who can tell?"—*post mortem nescio*. "If ghosts, my sons, do feel anything after death, my sorrow will be lessened by your frequent coming to me here!"—"This is a *privileged* tomb; to my family and descendants has been conceded the right of visiting this place as often as they please."—"This is an eternal habitation; here lie I; here I shall lie for ever."—"Reader! if you doubt that the soul survives, make your oblation and a prayer for me; and you shall understand!"

The elder of the two readers, certainly, was little affected by those pathetic suggestions. It was long ago that after visiting the banks of the Padus, where he had sought in vain for the poplars (sisters of Phaeton erewhile) whose tears became amber, he had once for all arranged for himself a view of the world exclusive of all reference to what might lie beyond its "flaming barriers". And at the age of sixty he had no misgivings. His elegant and self-complacent but far from unamiable scepticism, long since brought to perfection, never failed him. It surrounded him, as some are surrounded by a magic ring of fine aristocratic manners, with "a rampart", through which he himself never broke, nor permitted any thing or person to break upon him. Gay, animated, content with his old age as it was, the aged student still took a lively interest in studious youth.—Could Marius inform him of any such, now known to him in Rome? What did the young men learn, just then? and how?

In answer, Marius became fluent concerning the promise of one young student, the son, as it presently appeared, of parents of whom Lucian himself knew something; and soon afterwards the lad was seen coming along briskly—a lad with gait and figure well enough expressive of the sane mind in the healthy body, though a little slim and worn of feature, and with a pair of eyes expressly designed, it might seem, for fine glancings at the stars. At the sight of Marius he paused suddenly, and with a modest blush on recognising his companion, who straightway took with the youth, so prettily enthusiastic, the freedom of an old friend.

In a few moments the three were seated together, immediately above the fragrant borders of a rose-farm, on the marble bench of one of the *exhedræ* for the use of foot-passengers at the roadside, from which they could overlook the grand, earnest prospect of the *Campagna*, and enjoy the air. Fancying that the lad's plainly written enthusiasm had induced in the elder speaker somewhat more fervour than was usual with him, Marius listened to the conversation which follows.—

"Ah! Hermotimus! Hurrying to lecture!—if I may judge by your

pace, and that volume in your hand. You were thinking hard as you came along, moving your lips and waving your arms. Some fine speech you were pondering, some knotty question, some viewy doctrine—not to be idle for a moment, to be making progress in philosophy, even on your way to the schools. To-day, however, you need go no further. We read a notice at the schools that there would be no lecture. Stay therefore, and talk awhile with us.

—With pleasure, Lucian.—Yes! I was ruminating yesterday's conference. One must not lose a moment. *Life is short and art is long!* And it was of the art of medicine, that was first said—a thing so much easier than divine philosophy, to which one can hardly attain in a lifetime, unless one be ever wakeful, ever on the watch. And here the hazard is no little one:—By the attainment of a true philosophy to attain happiness; or, having missed both, to perish, as one of the vulgar herd.

—The prize is a great one, Hermotimus! and you must needs be near it, after these months of toil, and with that scholarly pallor of yours. Unless, indeed, you have already laid hold upon it, and kept us in the dark.

—How could that be, Lucian? Happiness, as Hesiod says, abides very far hence; and the way to it is long and steep and rough. I see myself still at the beginning of my journey; still but at the mountain's foot. I am trying with all my might to get forward. What I need is a hand, stretched out to help me.

—And is not the master sufficient for that? Could he not, like Zeus in Homer, let down to you, from that high place, a golden cord, to draw you up thither, to himself and to that Happiness, to which he ascended so long ago?

—The very point, Lucian! Had it depended on him I should long ago have been caught up. 'Tis I, am wanting.

—Well, keep your eye fixed on the journey's end, and that happiness there above, with confidence in his goodwill.

—Ah! there are many who start cheerfully on the journey and proceed a certain distance, but lose heart when they light on the obstacles of the way. Only, those who endure to the end do come to the mountain's top, and thereafter live in Happiness:—live a wonderful manner of life, seeing all other people from that great height no bigger than tiny ants.

—What little fellows you make of us—less than the pygmies—down in the dust here. Well! we, 'the vulgar herd', as we creep along, will not forget you in our prayers, when you are seated up there above the clouds, whither you have been so long hastening. But tell me, Hermotimus!—when do you expect to arrive there?

—Ah! that I know not. In twenty years, perhaps, I shall be really on the summit.—A great while! you think. But then, again, the prize I contend for is a great one.

—Perhaps! But as to those twenty years—that you will live so long. Has the master assured you of that? Is he a prophet as well as a philosopher? For I suppose you would not endure all this, upon a mere chance—toiling day and night, though it might happen that just ere the last step, Destiny seized you by the foot and plucked you thence, with your hope still unfulfilled.

—Hence, with these ill-omened words, Lucian! Were I to survive but for a day, I should be happy, having once attained wisdom.

—How?—Satisfied with a single day, after all those labours?

—Yes! one blessed moment were enough!

—But again, as you have never been, how know you that happiness is to be had up there, at all—the happiness that is to make all this worth while?

—I believe what the master tells me. Of a certainty he knows, being now far above all others.

—And what was it he told you about it? Is it riches, or glory, or some indescribable pleasure?

—Hush! my friend! All those are nothing in comparison of the life there.

—What, then, shall those who come to the end of this discipline—what excellent thing shall they receive, if not these?

—Wisdom, the absolute goodness and the absolute beauty, with the sure and certain knowledge of all things—how they are. Riches and glory and pleasure—whatsoever belongs to the body—they have cast from them: stripped bare of all that, they mount up, even as Hercules, consumed in the fire, became a god. He too cast aside all that he had of his earthly mother, and bearing with him the divine element, pure and undefiled, winged his way to heaven from the discerning flame. Even so do they, detached from all that others prize, by the burning fire of a true philosophy, ascend to the highest degree of happiness.

—Strange! And do they never come down again from the heights to help those whom they left below? Must they, when they be once come thither, there remain for ever, laughing, as you say, at what other men prize?

—More than that! They whose imitation is entire are subject no longer to anger, fear, desire, regret. Nay! They scarcely feel at all.

—Well! as you have leisure to-day, why not tell an old friend in what way you first started on your philosophic journey? For, if I might, I should like to join company with you from this very day.

—If you be really willing, Lucian! you will learn in no long time your advantage over all other people. They will seem but as children, so far above them will be your thoughts.

—Well! Be you my guide! It is but fair. But tell me—Do you allow learners to contradict, if anything is said which they don't think right?

—No, indeed! Still, if you wish, oppose your questions. In that way you will learn more easily.

—Let me know, then—Is there one only way which leads to a true philosophy—your own way—the way of the Stoics: or is it true, as I have heard, that there are many ways of approaching it?

—Yes! Many ways! There are the Stoics, and the Peripatetics, and those who call themselves after Plato: there are the enthusiasts for Diogenes, and Antisthenes, and the followers of Pythagoras, besides others.

—It was true, then. But again, is what they say the same or different?

—Very different.

—Yet the truth, I conceive, would be one and the same, from all of them. Answer me then—In what, or in whom, did you confide when you first betook yourself to philosophy, and seeing so many doors open to you, passed them all by and went in to the Stoics, as if there alone lay the way of truth? What token had you? Forget, please, all you are to-day—half-way, or more, on the philosophic journey: answer me as you would have done then, a mere outsider as I am now.

—Willingly! It was there the great majority went! 'Twas by that I judged it to be the better way.

—A majority how much greater than the Epicureans, the Platonists, the Peripatetics? You, doubtless, counted them respectively, as with the votes in a scrutiny.

—No! But this was not my only motive. I heard it said by every one that the Epicureans were soft and voluptuous, the Peripatetics avaricious and quarrelsome, and Plato's followers puffed up with pride. But of the Stoics, not a few pronounced that they were true men, that they knew everything, that theirs was the royal road, the one road, to wealth, to wisdom, to all that can be desired.

—Of course those who said this were not themselves Stoics: you would not have believed them—still less their opponents. They were the vulgar, therefore.

—True! But you must know that I did not trust to others exclusively. I trusted also to myself—to what I saw. I saw the Stoics going through the world after a seemly manner, neatly clad, never in

excess, always collected, ever faithful to the mean which all pronounce 'golden'.

—You are trying an experiment on me. You would fain see how far you can mislead me as to your real ground. The kind of probation you describe is applicable, indeed, to works of art, which are rightly judged by their appearance to the eye. There is something in the comely form, the graceful drapery, which tells surely of the hand of Pheidias or Alcamenes. But if philosophy is to be judged by outward appearances, what would become of the blind man, for instance, unable to observe the attire and gait of your friends, the Stoics?

—It was not of the blind I was thinking.

—Yet there must needs be some common criterion in a matter so important to all. Put the blind, if you will, beyond the privileges of philosophy; though they perhaps need that inward vision more than all others. But can those who are not blind, be they as keen-sighted as you will, collect a single fact of mind from a man's attire, from anything outward?—Understand me! You attached yourself to these men—did you not?—because of a certain love you had for the mind in them, the thoughts they possessed desiring the mind in you to be improved thereby?

—Assuredly!

—How, then, did you find it possible, by the sort of signs you just now spoke of, to distinguish the true philosopher from the false? Matters of that kind are not wont so to reveal themselves. They are but hidden mysteries, hardly to be guessed at through the words and acts which may in some sort be conformable to them. You, however, it would seem, can look straight into the heart in men's bosoms, and acquaint yourself with what really passes there.

—You are making sport of me, Lucian! In truth, it was with God's help I made my choice, and I don't repent it.

—And still you refuse to tell me, to save me from perishing in that 'vulgar herd'.

—Because nothing I can tell you would satisfy you.

—You are mistaken, my friend! But since you deliberately conceal the thing, grudging me, as I suppose, that true philosophy which would make me equal to you, I will try, if it may be, to find out for myself the exact criterion in these matters—how to make a perfectly safe choice. And, do you listen.

—I will; there may be something worth knowing in what you will say.

—Well!—only don't laugh if I seem a little fumbling in my efforts. The fault is yours, in refusing to share your lights with me. Let Philosophy, then, be like a city—a city whose citizens within it are a

happy people, as your master would tell you, having lately come thence, as we suppose. All the virtues are theirs, and they are little less than gods. Those acts of violence which happen among us are not to be seen in their streets. They live together in one mind, very seemly; the things which beyond everything else cause men to contend against each other, having no place among them. Gold and silver, pleasure, vainglory, they have long since banished, as being unprofitable to the commonwealth; and their life is an unbroken calm, in liberty, equality, an equal happiness.

—And is it not reasonable that all men should desire to be of a city such as that, and take no account of the length and difficulty of the way thither, so only they may one day become its freemen?

—It might well be the business of life:—leaving all else, forgetting one's native country here, unmoved by the tears, the restraining hands, of parents or children, if one had them—only bidding them follow the same road; and if they would not or could not, shaking them off, leaving one's very garment in their hands if they took hold on us, to start off straightway for that happy place! For there is no fear, I suppose, of being shut out if one came thither naked. I remember, indeed, long ago an aged man related to me how things passed there, offering himself to be my leader, and enrol me on my arrival in the number of the citizens. I was but fifteen—certainly very foolish: and it may be that I was then actually within the suburbs, or at the very gates, of the city. Well, this aged man told me, among other things, that all the citizens were wayfarers from afar. Among them were barbarians and slaves, poor men—aye! and cripples—all indeed who truly desired that citizenship. For the only legal conditions of enrolment were—not wealth, nor bodily beauty, nor noble ancestry—things not named among them—but intelligence, and the desire for moral beauty, and earnest labour. The last comer, thus qualified, was made equal to the rest: master and slave, patrician, plebeian, were words they had not—in that blissful place. And believe me, if that blissful, that beautiful place, were set on a hill visible to all the world, I should long ago have journeyed thither. But, as you say, it is far off: and one must needs find out for oneself the road to it, and the best possible guide. And I find a multitude of guides, who press on me their services, and protest, all alike, that they have themselves come thence. Only, the roads they propose are many, and towards adverse quarters. And one of them is steep and stony, and through the beating sun; and the other is through green meadows, and under grateful shade, and by many a fountain of water. But howsoever the road may be, at each one of them stands a credible guide; he puts out his hand and would have you come his way. All other ways are wrong,

all other guides false. Hence my difficulty!—The number and variety of the ways! For you know, *There is but one road that leads to Corinth.*

—Well! If you go the whole round, you will find no better guides than those. If you wish to get to Corinth, you will follow the traces of Zeno and Chrysippus. It is impossible otherwise.

—Yes! The old, familiar language! Were one of Plato's fellow-pilgrims here, or a follower of Epicurus—or fifty others—each would tell me that I should never get to Corinth except in his company. One must therefore credit all alike, which would be absurd; or, what is far safer, distrust all alike, until one has discovered the truth. Suppose now, that, being as I am, ignorant which of all philosophers is really in possession of truth, I choose your sect, relying on yourself—my friend, indeed, yet still acquainted only with the way of the Stoics; and that then some divine power brought Plato, and Aristotle, and Pythagoras, and the others, back to life again. Well! They would come round about me, and put me on my trial for my presumption, and say:—‘In whom was it you confided when you preferred Zeno and Chrysippus to me?—and me?—masters of far more venerable age than those, who are but of yesterday; and though you have never held any discussion with us, nor made trial of our doctrine? It is not thus that the law would have judges do—listen to one party and refuse to let the other speak for himself. If judges act thus, there may be an appeal to another tribunal.’ What should I answer? Would it be enough to say:—‘I trusted my friend Hermotimus?’—‘We know not Hermotimus, nor he us,’ they would tell me; adding, with a smile, ‘your friend thinks he may believe all our adversaries say of us whether in ignorance or in malice. Yet if he were umpire in the games, and if he happened to see one of our wrestlers, by way of a preliminary exercise, knock to pieces an antagonist of mere empty air, he would not thereupon pronounce him a victor. Well! don't let your friend Hermotimus suppose, in like manner, that his teachers have really prevailed over us in those battles of theirs, fought with our mere shadows. That, again, were to be like children lightly overthrowing their own card-castles; or like boy-archers, who cry out when they hit the target of straw. The Persian and Scythian bowmen, as they speed along, can pierce a bird on the wing.’

—Let us leave Plato and the others at rest. It is not for me to contend against them. Let us rather search out together if the truth of Philosophy be as I say. Why summon the athletes, and archers from Persia?

—Yes! let them go, if you think them in the way. And now do you speak! You really look as if you had something wonderful to deliver.

—Well then, Lucian! to me it seems quite possible for one who has learned the doctrines of the Stoics only, to attain from those a knowledge of the truth, without proceeding to inquire into all the various tenets of the others. Look at the question in this way. If one told you that twice two make four, would it be necessary for you to go the whole round of the arithmeticians, to see whether any one of them will say that twice two make five, or seven? Would you not see at once that the man tells the truth?

—At once.

—Why then do you find it impossible that one who has fallen in with the Stoics only, in their enunciation of what is true, should adhere to them, and seek after no others; assured that four could never be five, even if fifty Platos, fifty Aristotles said so?

—You are beside the point, Hermotimus! You are likening open questions to principles universally received. Have you ever met any one who said that twice two make five, or seven?

—No! only a madman would say that.

—And have you ever met, on the other hand, a Stoic and an Epicurean who were agreed upon the beginning and the end, the principle and the final cause, of things? Never! Then your parallel is false. We are inquiring to which of the sects philosophic truth belongs, and you seize on it by anticipation, and assign it to the Stoics, alleging, what is by no means clear, that it is they for whom twice two make four. But the Epicureans, or the Platonists, might say that it is they, in truth, who make two and two equal four, while you make them five or seven. Is it not so, when you think *virtue* the only good, and the Epicureans *pleasure*; when you hold all things to be *material*, while the Platonists admit something *immaterial*? As I said, you resolve offhand, in favour of the Stoics, the very point which needs a critical decision. If it is clear beforehand that the Stoics alone make two and two equal four, then the others must hold their peace. But so long as that is the very point of debate, we must listen to all sects alike, or be well-assured that we shall seem but partial in our judgment.

—I think, Lucian! that you do not altogether understand my meaning. To make it clear, then, let us suppose that two men had entered a temple, of Aesculapius,—say! or Bacchus; and that afterwards one of the sacred vessels is found to be missing. And the two men must be searched to see which of them has hidden it under his garment. For it is certainly in the possession of one or the other of them. Well! if it be found on the first there will be no need to search the second; if it is not found on the first, then the other must have it; and again, there will be no need to search him.

—Yes! So let it be.

—And we too, Lucian! if we have found the holy vessel in possession of the Stoics shall no longer have need to search other philosophers, having attained that we were seeking. Why trouble ourselves further?

—No need, if something had indeed been found, and you knew it to be that lost thing: if, at the least, you could recognise the sacred object when you saw it. But truly, as the matter now stands, not two persons only have entered the temple, one or the other of whom must needs have taken the golden cup, but a whole crowd of persons. And then, it is not clear what the lost object really is—cup, or flagon, or diadem; for one of the priests avers this, another that; they are not even in agreement as to its material: some will have it to be of brass, others of silver, or gold. It thus becomes necessary to search the garments of all persons, who have entered the temple, if the lost vessel is to be recovered. And if you find a golden cup on the first of them, it will still be necessary to proceed in searching the garments of the others; for it is not certain that this cup really belonged to the temple. Might there not be many such golden vessels?—No! we must go on to every one of them, placing all that we find in the midst together, and then make our guess which of all those things may fairly be supposed to be the property of the god. For, again, the circumstance adds greatly to our difficulty, that without exception every one searched is found to have something upon him—cup, or flagon, or diadem, of brass, of silver, of gold: and still, all the while, it is not ascertained which of all these is the sacred thing. And you must still hesitate to pronounce any one of them guilty of the sacrilege—those objects may be their own lawful property: one cause of all this obscurity being, as I think, that there was no inscription on the lost cup, if cup it was. Had the name of the god, or even that of the donor, been upon it, at least we should have had less trouble, and having detected the inscription should have ceased to trouble any one else by our search.

—I have nothing to reply to that.

—Hardly anything plausible. So that if we wish to find who it is has the sacred vessel, or who will be our best guide to Corinth, we must needs proceed to every one and examine him with the utmost care, stripping off his garment and considering him closely. Scarcely, even so, shall we come at the truth. And if we are to have a credible adviser regarding this question of philosophy—which of all philosophies one ought to follow—he alone who is acquainted with the *dicta* of every one of them can be such a guide: all others must be inadequate. I would give no credence to them if they lacked information as to one only. If somebody introduced a fair person and told

us he was the fairest of all men, we should not believe that, unless we knew that he had seen all the people in the world. Fair he might be; but, fairest of all—none could know, unless he had seen all. And we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of all. Unless we find him, we shall think we have failed. It is no casual beauty that will content us; what we are seeking after is that supreme beauty which must of necessity be unique.

—What then is one to do, if the matter be really thus? Perhaps you know better than I. All I see is that very few of us would have time to examine all the various sects of philosophy in turn, even if we began in early life. I know not how it is; but though you seem to me to speak reasonably, yet (I must confess it) you have distressed me not a little by this exact exposition of yours. I was unlucky in coming out to-day, and in my falling in with you, who have thrown me into utter perplexity by your proof that the discovery of truth is impossible, just as I seemed to be on the point of attaining my hope.

—Blame your parents, my child, not me! Or rather, blame mother Nature herself, for giving us but seventy or eighty years instead of making us as long-lived as Tithonus. For my part, I have but led you from premise to conclusion.

—Nay! you are a mocker! I know not wherefore, but you have a grudge against philosophy; and it is your entertainment to make a jest of her lovers.

—Ah! Hermotimus! what the Truth may be, you philosophers may be able to tell better than I. But so must at least I know of her, that she is one by no means pleasant to those who hear her speak: in the matter of pleasantness, she is far surpassed by Falsehood: and Falsehood has the pleasanter countenance. She, nevertheless, being conscious of no alloy within, discourses with boldness to all men, who therefore have little love for her. See how angry you are now because I have stated the truth about certain things of which we are both alike enamoured—that they are hard to come by. It is as if you had fallen in love with a statue and hoped to win its favour, thinking it a human creature; and I, understanding it to be but an image of brass or stone, had shown you, as a friend, that your love was impossible, and thereupon you had conceived that I bore you some ill-will.

—But still, does it not follow from what you said, that we must renounce philosophy and pass our days in idleness?

—When did you hear me say that? I did but assert that if we are to seek after philosophy, whereas there are many ways professing to lead thereto, we must with much exactness distinguish them.

—Well, Lucian! that we must go to all the schools in turn, and

test what they say, if we are to choose the right one, is perhaps reasonable; but surely ridiculous, unless we are to live as many years as the Phoenix, to be so lengthy in the trial of each; as if it were not possible to learn the whole by the part! They say that Pheidias, when he was shown one of the talons of a lion, computed the stature and age of the animal it belonged to, modelling a complete lion upon the standard of a single part of it. You too would recognise a human hand were the rest of the body concealed. Even so with the schools of philosophy:—the leading doctrines of each might be learned in an afternoon. That over-exactness of yours, which required so long a time, is by no means necessary for making the better choice.

—You are forcible, Hermotimus! with this theory of *The Whole by the Part*. Yet, methinks, I heard you but now propound the contrary. But tell me; would Pheidias when he saw the lion's talon have known that it was a lion's, if he had never seen the animal? Surely, the cause of his recognising the part was his knowledge of the whole. There is a way of choosing one's philosophy even less troublesome than yours. Put the names of all the philosophers into an urn. Then call a little child, and let him draw the name of the philosopher you shall follow all the rest of your days.

—Nay! be serious with me. Tell me; did you ever buy wine?

—Surely.

—And did you first go the whole round of the wine-merchants, tasting and comparing their wines?

—By no means.

—No! You were contented to order the first good wine you found at your price. By tasting a little you were ascertained of the quality of the whole cask. How if you had gone to each of the merchants in turn, and said, 'I wish to buy a *cotylé* of wine. Let me drink out the whole cask. Then I shall be able to tell which is best, and where I ought to buy.' Yet this is what you would do with the philosophies. Why drain the cask when you might taste, and see?

—How slippery you are; how you escape from one's fingers! Still, you have given me an advantage, and are in your own trap.

—How so?

—Thus! You take a common object known to every one, and make *wine* the figure of a thing which presents the greatest variety in itself, and about which all men are at variance, because it is an unseen and difficult thing. I hardly know wherein philosophy and wine are alike unless it be in this, that the philosophers exchange their ware for money, like the wine-merchants; some of them with a mixture of water or worse, or giving short measure. However, let us consider your parallel. The wine in the cask, you say, is of one kind through-

out. But have the philosophers—has your own master even—but one and the same thing only to tell you, every day and all days, on a subject so manifold? Otherwise, how can you know the whole by the tasting of one part? The whole is not the same—Ah! and it may be that God has hidden the good wine of philosophy at the bottom of the cask. You must drain it to the end if you are to find those drops of divine sweetness you seem so much to thirst for! Yourself, after drinking so deeply, are still but at the beginning, as you said. But is not philosophy rather like this? Keep the figure of the merchant and the cask: but let it be filled, not with wine, but with every sort of grain. You come to buy. The merchant hands you a little of the wheat which lies at the top. Could you tell by looking at that, whether the chick-peas were clean, the lentils tender, the beans full? And then, whereas in selecting our wine we risk only our money; in selecting our philosophy we risk ourselves, as you told me—might ourselves sink into the dregs of ‘the vulgar herd’. Moreover, while you may not drain the whole cask of wine by way of tasting, Wisdom grows no less by the depth of your drinking. Nay! if you take of her, she is increased thereby.

And then I have another similitude to propose, as regards this tasting of philosophy. Don’t think I blaspheme her if I say that it may be with her as with some deadly poison, hemlock or aconite. These too, though they cause death, yet kill not if one tastes but a minute portion. You would suppose that the tiniest particle must be sufficient.

—Be it as you will, Lucian! One must live a hundred years: one must sustain all this labour; otherwise philosophy is unattainable.

—Not so! Though there were nothing strange in that, if it be true, as you said at first, that *Life is short and art is long*. But now you take it hard that we are not to see you this very day, before the sun goes down, a Chrysippus, a Pythagoras, a Plato.

—You overtake me, Lucian! and drive me into a corner; in jealousy of heart, I believe, because I have made some progress in doctrine whereas you have neglected yourself.

—Well! Don’t attend to me! Treat me as a Corybant, a fanatic: and do you go forward on this road of yours. Finish the journey in accordance with the view you had of these matters at the beginning of it. Only, be assured that my judgment on it will remain unchanged. Reason still says, that without criticism, without a clear, exact, unbiassed intelligence to try them, all those theories—all things—will have been seen but in vain. ‘To that end,’ she tells us, ‘much time is necessary, many delays of judgment, a cautious gait; repeated inspection.’ And we are not to regard the outward appearance, or the

reputation of wisdom, in any of the speakers; but like the judges of Areopagus, who try their causes in the darkness of the night, look only to what they *say*.

—Philosophy, then, is impossible, or possible only in another life!

—Hermotimus! I grieve to tell you that all this even, may be in truth insufficient. After all, we may deceive ourselves in the belief that we have found something:—like the fishermen! Again and again they let down the net. At last they feel something heavy, and with vast labour draw up, not a load of fish, but only a pot full of sand, or a great stone.

—I don't understand what you mean by the net. It is plain that you have caught me in it.

—Try to get out! You can swim as well as another. We may go to all philosophers in turn and make trial of them. Still, I for my part, hold it by no means certain that any one of them really possesses what we seek. The truth may be a thing that not one of them has yet found. You have twenty beans in your hand, and you bid ten persons guess how many: one says five, another fifteen; it is possible that one of them may tell the true number; but it is not impossible that all may be wrong. So it is with the philosophers. All alike are in search of Happiness—what kind of thing it is. One says one thing, one another: it is a pleasure; it is virtue;—what not? And Happiness may indeed be one of those things. But it is possible also that it may be still something else, different and distinct from them all.

—What is this?—There is something, I know not how, very sad and disheartening in what you say. We seem to have come round in a circle to the spot whence we started, and to our first incertitude. Ah! Lucian, what have you done to me? You have proved my priceless pearl to be but ashes, and all my past labour to have been in vain.

—Reflect, my friend, that you are not the first person who has thus failed of the good thing he hoped for. All philosophers, so to speak, are but fighting about the 'ass's shadow'. To me you seem like one who should weep, and reproach fortune because he is not able to climb up into heaven, or go down into the sea by Sicily and come up at Cyprus, or sail on wings in one day from Greece to India. And the true cause of his trouble is that he has based his hope on what he has seen in a dream, or his own fancy has put together; without previous thought whether what he desires is in itself attainable and within the compass of human nature. Even so, methinks, has it happened with you. As you dreamed, so largely, of those wonderful things, came Reason, and woke you up from sleep, a little roughly: and then you are angry with Reason, your eyes being still but half open, and find it hard to shake off sleep for the pleasure of what you

saw therein. Only, don't be angry with me, because, as a friend, I would not suffer you to pass your life in a dream, pleasant perhaps, but still only a dream—because I wake you up and demand that you should busy yourself with the proper business of life, and send you to it possessed of common sense. What your soul was full of just now is not very different from those Gorgons and Chimæras and the like, which the poets and the painters construct for us, fancy-free;—things which never were, and never will be, though many believe in them, and all like to see and hear of them, just because they are so strange and odd.

And you too, methinks, having heard from some such maker of marvels of a certain woman of a fairness beyond nature—beyond the Graces, beyond Venus Urania herself—asked not if he spoke truth, and whether this woman be really alive in the world, but straightway fell in love with her; as they say that Medea was enamoured of Jason in a dream. And what more than anything else seduced you, and others like you, into that passion, for a vain idol of the fancy, is, that he who told you about that fair women, from the very moment when you first believed that what he said was true, brought forward all the rest in consequent order. Upon her alone your eyes were fixed; by her he led you along, when once you had given him a hold upon you—led you along the straight road, as he said, to the beloved one. All was easy after that. None of you asked again whether it was the true way; following one after another, like sheep led by the green bough in the hand of the shepherd. He moved you hither and thither with his finger, as easily as water spilt on a table!

My friend! Be not so lengthy in preparing the banquet, lest you die of hunger! I saw one who poured water into a mortar, and ground it with all his might with a pestle of iron, fancying he did a thing useful and necessary: but it remained water only, none the less."

Just there the conversation broke off suddenly, and the disputants parted. The horses were come for Lucian. The boy went on his way, and Marius onward, to visit a friend whose abode lay further. As he returned to Rome towards evening the melancholy aspect, natural to a city of the dead, had triumphed over the superficial gaudiness of the early day. He could almost have fancied Canidia there, picking her way among the rickety lamps, to rifle some neglected or ruined tomb; for these tombs were not all equally well cared for (*Post mortem nescio!*) and it had been one of the pieties of Aurelius to frame a severe law to prevent the defacing of such monuments. To Marius there seemed to be some new meaning in that terror of isolation, of being left alone in these places, of which the sepulchral inscriptions were so full. A blood-red sunset was dying angrily, and its wild

glare upon the shadowy objects around helped to combine the associations of this famous way, its deeply graven marks of immemorial travel, together with the earnest questions of the morning as to the true way of that other sort of travelling, around an image, almost ghastly in the traces of its great sorrows—bearing along for ever, on bleeding feet, the instrument of its punishment—which was all Marius could recall distinctly of a certain Christian legend he had heard. The legend told of an encounter at this very spot, of two wayfarers on the Appian Way, as also upon some very dimly discerned mental journey, altogether different from himself and his late companions—an encounter between Love, literally fainting by the road, and Love “travelling in the greatness of his strength”, Love itself, suddenly appearing to sustain that other. A strange contrast to anything actually presented in that morning’s conversation, it seemed nevertheless to echo its very words—“Do they never come down again,” he heard once more the well-modulated voice: “Do they never come down again from the heights, to help those whom they left here below?”—“And we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of all. Unless we find him, we shall think we have failed.”

CHAPTER XXV

SUNT LACRIMÆ RERUM

It was become a habit with Marius—one of his modernisms—developed by his assistance at the emperor’s “conversations with himself”, to keep a register of the movements of his own private thoughts and humours; not continuously indeed, yet sometimes for lengthy intervals, during which it was no idle self-indulgence, but a necessity of his intellectual life, to “confess himself”, with an intimacy, seemingly rare among the ancients; ancient writers, at all events, having been jealous, for the most part, of affording us so much as a glimpse of that interior self, which in many cases would have actually doubled the interest of their objective informations.

“If a particular tutelary or *genius*,” writes Marius, “according to old belief, walks through life beside each one of us, mine is very certainly a capricious creature. He fills one with wayward, unaccountable, yet quite irresistible humours, and seems always to be in collusion with some outward circumstance, often trivial enough in itself—the condition of the weather, forsooth!—the people one meets by chance—the things one happens to overhear them say, veritable ἐνόδιοι σύμβολοι, or omens by the wayside, as the old Greeks fancied—to

push on the unreasonable prepossessions of the moment into weighty motives. It was doubtless a quite explicable, physical fatigue that presented me to myself, on awaking this morning, so lack-lustre and trite. But I must needs take my petulance, contrasting it with my accustomed morning hopefulness, as a sign of the ageing of appetite, of a decay in the very capacity of enjoyment. We need some imaginative stimulus, some not impossible ideal such as may shape vague hope, and transform it into effective desire, to carry us year after year, without disgust, through the routine-work which is so large a part of life.

"Then, how if appetite, be it for real or ideal, should itself fail one after awhile? Ah, yes! it is of cold always that men die; and on some of us it creeps very gradually. In truth, I can remember just such a lack-lustre condition of feeling once or twice before. But I note, that it was accompanied then by an odd indifference, as the thought of them occurred to me, in regard to the sufferings of others—a kind of callousness, so unusual with me, as at once to mark the humour it accompanied as a palpably morbid one that could not last. Were those sufferings, great or little, I asked myself then, of more real consequence to them than mine to me, as I remind myself that 'nothing that will end is really long'—long enough to be thought of importance? But to-day, my own sense of fatigue, the pity I conceive for myself, disposed me strongly to a tenderness for others. For a moment the whole world seemed to present itself as a hospital of sick persons; many of them sick in mind; all of whom it would be a brutality not to humour, not to indulge.

"Why, when I went out to walk off my wayward fancies, did I confront the very sort of incident (my unfortunate *genius* had surely beckoned it from afar to vex me) likely to irritate them further? A party of men were coming down the street. They were leading a fine race-horse; a handsome beast, but badly hurt somewhere, in the circus, and useless. They were taking him to slaughter; and I think the animal knew it: he cast such looks, as if of mad appeal, to those who passed him, as he went among the strangers to whom his former owner had committed him, to die, in his beauty and pride, for just that one mischance or fault; although the morning air was still so animating, and pleasant to snuff. I could have fancied a human soul in the creature, swelling against its luck. And I had come across the incident just when it would figure to me as the very symbol of our poor humanity, in its capacities for pain, its wretched accidents, and those imperfect sympathies, which can never quite identify us with one another; the very power of utterance and appeal to others seeming to fail us, in proportion as our sorrows come home to ourselves,

are really our own. We are constructed for suffering! What proofs of it does but one day afford, if we care to note them, as we go—a whole long chaplet of sorrowful mysteries! *Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.*

“Men’s fortunes touch us! The little children of one of those institutions for the support of orphans, now become fashionable among us by way of memorial of eminent persons deceased, are going, in long file, along the street, on their way to a holiday in the country. They halt, and count themselves with an air of triumph, to show that they are all there. Their gay chatter has disturbed a little group of peasants; a young woman and her husband, who had brought the old mother, now past work and witless, to place her in a house provided for such afflicted people. They are fairly affectionate, but anxious how the thing they have to do may go—hope only she may permit them to leave her there behind quietly. And the poor old soul is excited by the noise made by the children, and partly aware of what is going to happen to her. She too begins to count—one, two, three, five—on her trembling fingers, misshapen by a life of toil. ‘Yes! yes! and twice five make ten’—they say, to pacify her. It is her last appeal to be taken home again; her proof that all is not yet up with her; that she is, at all events, still as capable as those joyous children.

“At the baths, a party of labourers are at work upon one of the great brick furnaces, in a cloud of black dust. A frail young child has brought food for one of them, and sits apart, waiting till his father comes—watching the labour, but with a sorrowful distaste for the din and dirt. He is regarding wistfully his own place in the world, there before him. His mind, as he watches, is grown up for a moment; and he foresees, as it were, in that moment, all the long tale of days, of early awakings, of his own coming life of drudgery at work like this.

“A man comes along carrying a boy whose rough work has already begun—the only child—whose presence beside him sweetened the father’s toil a little. The boy has been badly injured by a fall of brick-work, yet, with an effort, rides boldly on his father’s shoulders. It will be the way of natural affection to keep him alive as long as possible, though with that miserably shattered body—‘Ah! with us still, and feeling our care beside him!’—and yet surely not without a heart-breaking sigh of relief, alike from him and them, when the end comes.

“On the alert for incidents like these, yet of necessity passing them by on the other side, I find it hard to get rid of a sense that I, for one, have failed in love. I could yield to the humour till I seemed to have had my share in those great public cruelties, the shocking legal crimes

which are on record, like that cold-blooded slaughter, according to law, of the four hundred slaves in the reign of Nero, because one of their number was thought to have murdered his master. The reproach of that, together with the kind of facile apologies those who had no share in the deed may have made for it, as they went about quietly on their own affairs that day, seems to come very close to me, as I think upon it. And to how many of those now actually around me, whose life is a sore one, must I be indifferent, if I ever become aware of their soreness at all? To some, perhaps, the necessary conditions of my own life may cause me to be opposed, in a kind of natural conflict, regarding those interests which actually determine the happiness of theirs. I would that a stronger love might arise in my heart!

"Yet there is plenty of charity in the world. My patron, the Stoic emperor, has made it even fashionable. To celebrate one of his brief returns to Rome lately from the war, over and above a largess of gold pieces to all who would, the public debts were forgiven. He made a nice show of it: for once, the Romans entertained themselves with a good-natured spectacle, and the whole town came to see the great bonfire in the Forum, into which all bonds and evidence of debt were thrown on delivery, by the emperor himself; many private creditors following his example. That was done well enough! But still the feeling returns to me, that no charity of ours can get at a certain natural unkindness which I find in things themselves.

"When I first came to Rome, eager to observe its religion, especially its antiquities of religious usage, I assisted at the most curious, perhaps, of them all, the most distinctly marked with that immobility which is a sort of ideal in the Roman religion. The ceremony took place at a singular spot some miles distant from the city, among the low hills on the bank of the Tiber, beyond the Aurelian Gate. There, in a little wood of venerable trees, piously allowed their own way, age after age—ilex and cypress remaining where they fell at last, one over the other, and all caught, in that early Maytime, under a riotous tangle of wild clematis—was to be found a magnificent sanctuary, in which the members of the Arval College assembled themselves on certain days. The axe never touched those trees—Nay! it was forbidden to introduce any iron thing whatsoever within the precincts; not only because the deities of these quite places hate to be disturbed by the harsh noise of metal, but also in memory of that better age—the lost *Golden Age*—the homely age of the potters, of which the central act of the festival was a commemoration.

"The preliminary ceremonies were long and complicated, but of a character familiar enough. Peculiar to the time and place was the

solemn exposition, after lavation of hands, processions backwards and forwards, and certain changes of vestments, of the identical earthen vessels—veritable relics of the old religion of Numa!—the vessels from which the holy Numa himself had eaten and drunk, set forth above a kind of altar, amid a cloud of flowers and incense, and many lights, for the veneration of the credulous or the faithful.

“They were, in fact, cups or vases of burnt clay, rude in form; and the religious veneration thus offered to them expressed men’s desire to give honour to a simpler age, before iron had found place in human life: the persuasion that that age was worth remembering: a hope that it might come again.

“That a Numa, and his age of gold, would return, has been the hope or the dream of some, in every period. Yet if he did come back, or any equivalent of his presence, he could but weaken, and by no means smite through, that root of evil, certainly of sorrow, of outraged human sense, in things, which one must carefully distinguish from all preventible accidents. Death, and the little perpetual daily dyings, which have something of its sting, he must necessarily leave untouched. And, methinks, that were all the rest of man’s life framed entirely to his liking, he would straightway begin to sadden himself, over the fate—say, of the flowers! For there is, there has come to be since Numa lived perhaps, a capacity for sorrow in his heart, which grows with all the growth, alike of the individual and of the race, in intellectual delicacy and power, and which *will* find its aliment.

“Of that sort of golden age, indeed, one discerns even now a trace, here and there. Often have I maintained that, in this generous southern country at least, Epicureanism is the special philosophy of the poor. How little I myself really need, when people leave me alone, with the intellectual powers at work serenely. The drops of falling water, a few wild flowers with their priceless fragrance, a few tufts even of half-dead leaves, changing colour in the quiet of a room that has but light and shadow in it; these, for a susceptible mind, might well do duty for all the glory of Augustus. I notice sometimes what I conceive to be the precise character of the fondness of the roughest working-people for their young children, a fine appreciation, not only of their serviceable affection, but of their visible graces: and indeed, in this country, the children are almost always worth looking at. I see daily, in fine weather, a child like a delicate nosegay, running to meet the rudest of brick-makers as he comes from work. She is not at all afraid to hang upon his tough hand: and through her, he reaches out to, he makes his own, something from that strange region, so distant from him yet so real, of the world’s refinement. What is of finer soul, or of finer stuff in things, and demands delicate touching—to him

the delicacy of the little child represents that: it initiates him into that. There, surely, is a touch of the *secular* gold, of a perpetual age of gold. But then again, think for a moment, with what a hard humour at the nature of things, his struggle for bare life will go on, if the child should happen to die. I observed to-day, under one of the archways of the baths, two children at play, a little seriously—a fair girl and her crippled younger brother. Two toy chairs and a little table, and sprigs of fir set upright in the sand for a garden! They played at housekeeping. Well! the girl thinks her life a perfectly good thing in the service of this crippled brother. But she will have a jealous lover in time: and the boy, though his face is not altogether unpleasant, is after all a hopeless cripple.

“For there is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is, over and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable—some inexplicable shortcoming, or misadventure, on the part of nature itself—death, and old age as it must needs be, and that watching for their approach, which makes every stage of life like a dying over and over again. Almost all death is painful, and in every thing that comes to an end a touch of death, and therefore of wretched coldness struck home to one, of remorse, of loss and parting, of outraged attachments. Given faultless men and women, given a perfect state of society which should have no need to practise on men’s susceptibilities for its own selfish ends, adding one turn more to the wheel of the great rack for its own interest or amusement, there would still be this evil in the world, of a certain necessary sorrow and desolation, felt, just in proportion to the moral, or nervous perfection men have attained to. And what we need in the world, over against that, is a certain permanent and general power of compassion—humanity’s standing force of self-pity—as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all. I wonder, sometimes, in what way man has cajoled himself into the bearing of his burden thus far, seeing how every step in the capacity of apprehension his labour has won for him, from age to age, must needs increase his dejection. It is as if the increase of knowledge were but an increasing revelation of the radical hopelessness of his position: and I would that there were one even as I, behind this vain show of things!

“At all events, the actual conditions of our life being as they are, and the capacity for suffering so large a principle in things—since the only principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust is a ready sympathy with the pain one actually sees—it follows that the practical and effective difference between men will lie in their power of insight into those conditions, their power of sympathy. The future will be

with those who have most of it; while for the present, as I persuade myself, those who have much of it, have something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for every one, no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him. Nearly all of us, I suppose, have had our moments, in which any effective sympathy for us on the part of others has seemed impossible; in which our pain has seemed a stupid outrage upon us, like some overwhelming physical violence, from which we could take refuge, at best, only in some mere general sense of goodwill—somewhere in the world perhaps. And then, to one's surprise, the discovery of that goodwill, if it were only in a not unfriendly animal, may seem to have explained, to have actually justified to us, the fact of our pain. There have been occasions, certainly, when I have felt that if others cared for me as I cared for them, it would be, not so much a consolation, as an equivalent, for what one has lost or suffered: a realised profit on the summing up of one's accounts: a touching of that absolute ground amid all the changes of phenomena, such as our philosophers have of late confessed themselves quite unable to discover. In the mere clinging of human creatures to each other, nay! in one's own solitary self-pity, amid the effects even of what might appear irredeemable loss, I seem to touch the eternal. Something in that pitiful contact, something new and true, fact or apprehension of fact, is educes, which, on a review of all the perplexities of life, satisfies our moral sense, and removes that appearance of unkindness in the soul of things themselves, and assures us that not everything has been in vain.

"And I know not how, but in the thought thus suggested, I seem to take up, and re-knit myself to, a well-remembered hour, when by some gracious accident—it was on a journey—all things about me fell into a more perfect harmony than is their wont. Everything seemed to be, for a moment, after all, almost for the best. Through the train of my thoughts, one against another, it was as if I became aware of the dominant power of another person in controversy, wrestling with me. I seem to be come round to the point at which I left off then. The antagonist has closed with me again. A protest comes, out of the very depths of man's radically hopeless condition in the world, with the energy of one of those suffering yet prevailing deities, of which old poetry tells. Dared one hope that there is a heart, even as ours, in that divine 'Assistant' of one's thoughts—a heart even as mine, behind this vain show of things!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MARTYRS

“Ahl voilà les âmes qu’il falloit à la miennel”

Rousseau.

THE charm of its poetry, a poetry of the affections, wonderfully fresh in the midst of a threadbare world, would have led Marius, if nothing else had done so, again and again, to Cecilia’s house. He found a range of intellectual pleasures, altogether new to him, in the sympathy of that pure and elevated soul. Elevation of soul, generosity, humanity—little by little it came to seem to him as if these existed nowhere else. The sentiment of maternity, above all, as it might be understood there,—its claims, with the claims of all natural feeling everywhere, down to the sheep bleating on the hills, nay! even to the mother-wolf, in her hungry cave—seemed to have been vindicated, to have been enforced anew, by the sanction of some divine pattern thereof. He saw its legitimate place in the world given at last to the bare capacity for suffering in any creature, however feeble or apparently useless. In this chivalry, seeming to leave the world’s heroism a mere property of the stage, in this so scrupulous fidelity to what could not help itself, could scarcely claim not to be forgotten, what a contrast to the hard contempt of one’s own or other’s pain, of death, of glory even, in those discourses of Aurelius!

But if Marius thought at times that some long-cherished desires were now about to blossom for him, in the sort of home he had sometimes pictured to himself, the very charm of which would lie in its contrast to any random affections: that in this woman, to whom children instinctively clung, he might find such a sister, at least, as he had always longed for; there were also circumstances which reminded him that a certain rule forbidding second marriages, was among these people still in force; ominous incidents, moreover, warning a susceptible conscience not to mix together the spirit and the flesh, nor make the matter of a heavenly banquet serve for earthly meat and drink.

One day he found Cecilia occupied with the burial of one of the children of her household. It was from the tiny brow of such a child, as he now heard, that the new light had first shone forth upon them—through the light of mere physical life, glowing there again, when the child was dead, or supposed to be dead. The aged servant of Christ had arrived in the midst of their noisy grief; and mounting to

the little chamber where it lay, had returned, not long afterwards, with the child stirring in his arms as he descended the stair rapidly; bursting open the closely-wound folds of the shroud and scattering the funeral flowers from them, as the soul kindled once more through its limbs.

Old Roman common-sense had taught people to occupy their thoughts as little as might be with children who died young. Here, to-day, however, in this curious house, all thoughts were tenderly bent on the little waxen figure, yet with a kind of exultation and joy, notwithstanding the loud weeping of the mother. The other children, its late companions, broke with it, suddenly, into the place where the deep black bed lay open to receive it. Pushing away the grim *fossors*, the grave-diggers, they ranged themselves around it in order, and chanted that old psalm of theirs—*Laudate pueri dominum!* Dead children, children's graves—Marius had been always half aware of an old superstitious fancy in his mind concerning them; as if in coming near them he came near the failure of some lately-born hope or purpose of his own. And now, perusing intently the expression with which Cecilia assisted, directed, returned afterwards to her house, he felt that he too had had to-day his funeral of a little child. But it had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of "experience", to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable. Had he, after all, been taken unawares, so that it was no longer possible for him to fly? At least, during the journey he took, by way of testing the existence of any chain about him, he found a certain disappointment at his heart, greater than he could have anticipated; and as he passed over the crisp leaves, nipped off in multitudes by the first sudden cold of winter, he felt that the mental atmosphere within himself was perceptibly colder.

Yet, it was finally, a quite successful resignation which he achieved, on a review, after his manner, during that absence, of loss or gain. The image of Cecilia, it would seem, was already become for him like some matter of poetry, or of another man's story, or a picture on the wall. And on his return to Rome there had been a rumour, in that singular company, of things which spoke certainly not of any merely tranquil loving: hinted rather that he had come across a world, the lightest contact with which might make appropriate to himself also the precept that "They which have wives be as they that have none."

This was brought home to him, when, in early spring, he ventured once more to listen to the sweet singing of the Eucharist. It breathed

more than ever the spirit of a wonderful hope—of hopes more daring than poor, labouring humanity had ever seriously entertained before, though it was plain that a great calamity was befallen. Amid stifled sobbing, even as the pathetic words of the psalter relieved the tension of their hearts, the people around him still wore upon their faces their habitual gleam of joy, of placid satisfaction. They were still under the influence of an immense gratitude in thinking, even amid their present distress, of the hour of a great deliverance. As he followed again that mystical dialogue, he felt also again, like a mighty spirit about him, the potency, the half-realised presence, of a great multitude, as if thronging along those awful passages, to hear the sentence of its release from prison; a company which represented nothing less than—*orbis terrarum*—the whole company of mankind. And the special note of the day expressed that relief—a sound new to him, drawn deep from some old Hebrew source, as he conjectured, *Alleluia!* repeated over and over again, *Alleluia! Alleluia!* at every pause and movement of the long Easter ceremonies.

And then, in its place, by way of sacred lection, although in shocking contrast with the peaceful dignity of all around, came the *Epistle of the churches of Lyons and Vienne*, to “their sister”, the church of Rome. For the “Peace” of the church had been broken—broken, as Marius could not but acknowledge, on the responsibility of the emperor Aurelius himself, following tamely, and as a matter of course, the traces of his predecessors, gratuitously enlisting, against the good as well as the evil of that great pagan world, the strange new heroism of which this singular message was full. The greatness of it certainly lifted away all merely private regret, inclining one, at last, actually to draw sword for the oppressed, as if in some new order of knight-hood—

“The pains which our brethren have endured we have no power fully to tell, for the enemy came upon us with his whole strength. But the grace of God fought for us, set free the weak, and made ready those who, like pillars, were able to bear the weight. These, coming now into close strife with the foe, bore every kind of pang and shame. At the time of the fair which is held here with a great crowd, the governor led forth the Martyrs as a show. Holding what was thought great but little, and that the pains of to-day are not deserving to be measured against the glory that shall be made known, these worthy wrestlers went joyfully on their way; their delight and the sweet favour of God mingling in their faces, so that their bonds seemed but a goodly array, or like the golden bracelets of a bride. Filled with the fragrance of Christ, to some they seemed to have been touched with earthly perfumes.

"Vettius Epagathus, though he was very young, because he would not endure to see unjust judgment given against us, vented his anger, and sought to be heard for the brethren, for he was a youth of high place. Whereupon the governor asked him whether he also were a Christian. He confessed in a clear voice, and was added to the number of the Martyrs. But he had the Paraclete within him; as, in truth, he showed by the fulness of his love; glorying in the defence of his brethren, and to give his life for theirs.

"Then was fulfilled the saying of the Lord that the day should come, *When he that slayeth you will think that he doeth God service*. Most madly did the mob, the governor and the soldiers, rage against the handmaiden Blandina, in whom Christ showed that what seems mean among men is of price with Him. For whilst we all, and her earthly mistress, who was herself one of the contending Martyrs, were fearful lest through the weakness of the flesh she should be unable to profess the faith, Blandina was filled with such power that her tormentors, following upon each other from morning until night, owned that they were overcome, and had no more that they could do to her; admiring that she still breathed after her whole body was torn asunder.

"But this blessed one, in the very midst of her 'witness', renewed her strength; and to repeat, *I am Christ's!* was to her rest, refreshment, and relief from pain. As for Alexander, he neither uttered a groan nor any sound at all, but in his heart talked with God. Sanctus, the deacon, also, having borne beyond all measure pains devised by them, hoping that they would get something from him, did not so much as tell his name; but to all questions answered only, *I am Christ's!* For this he confessed instead of his name, his race, and everything beside. Whence also a strife in torturing him arose between the governor and those tormentors, so that when they had nothing else they could do they set red-hot plates of brass to the most tender parts of his body. But he stood firm in his profession, cooled and fortified by that stream of living water which flows from Christ. His corpse, a single wound, having wholly lost the form of man, was the measure of his pain. But Christ, paining in him, set forth an ensample to the rest—that there is nothing fearful, nothing painful, where the love of the Father overcomes. And as all those cruelties were made null through the patience of the Martyrs, they bethought them of other things; among which was their imprisonment in a dark and most sorrowful place, where many were privily strangled. But destitute of man's aid, they were filled with power from the Lord, both in body and mind, and strengthened their brethren. Also, much joy was in our virgin mother, the Church; for, by means of these, such as were fallen away retraced their steps—were again

conceived, were filled again with lively heat, and hastened to make the profession of their faith.

"The holy bishop Pothinus, who was now past ninety years old and weak in body, yet in his heat of soul and longing for martyrdom, roused what strength he had, and was also cruelly dragged to judgment, and gave witness. Thereupon he suffered many stripes, all thinking it would be a wickedness if they fell short in cruelty towards him, for that thus their own gods would be avenged. Hardly drawing breath, he was thrown into prison, and after two days there died.

"After these things their martyrdom was parted into divers manners. Plaiting as it were one crown of many colours and every sort of flowers, they offered it to God. Maturus, therefore, Sanctus and Blandina, were led to the wild beasts. And Maturus and Sanctus passed through all the pains of the amphitheatre, as if they had suffered nothing before: or rather, as having in many trials overcome, and now contending for the prize itself, were at last dismissed.

"But Blandina was bound and hung upon a stake, and set forth as food for the assault of the wild beasts. And as she thus seemed to be hung upon the Cross, by her fiery prayers she imparted much alacrity to those contending Witnesses. For as they looked upon her with the eye of flesh, through her, they saw Him that was crucified. But as none of the beasts would then touch her, she was taken down from the Cross, and sent back to prison for another day: that, though weak and mean, yet clothed with the mighty wrestler, Christ Jesus, she might by many conquests give heart to her brethren.

"On the last day, therefore, of the shows, she was brought forth again, together with Ponticus, a lad of about fifteen years old. They were brought in day by day to behold the pains of the rest. And when they wavered not, the mob was full of rage; pitying neither the youth of the lad, nor the sex of the maiden. Hence, they drave through them the whole round of pain. And Ponticus, taking heart from Blandina, having borne well the whole of those torments, gave up his life. Last of all, the blessed Blandina herself, as a mother that had given life to her children, and sent them like conquerors to the great King, hastened to them, with joy at the end, as to a marriage-feast; the enemy himself confessing that no woman had ever borne pain so manifold and great as hers.

"Nor even so was their anger appeased; some among them seeking for us pains, if it might be, yet greater; that the saying might be fulfilled, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still*. And their rage against the Martyrs took a new form, insomuch that we were in great sorrow for lack of freedom to entrust their bodies to the earth. Neither did the night-time, nor the offer of money, avail us for this matter; but

they set watch with much carefulness, as though it were a great gain to hinder their burial. Therefore, after the bodies had been displayed to view for many days, they were at last burned to ashes, and cast into the river Rhone, which flows by this place, that not a vestige of them might be left upon the earth. For they said, *Now shall we see whether they will rise again, and whether their God can save them out of our hands.*"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRIUMPH OF MARCUS AURELIUS

NOT many months after the date of that epistle, Marius, then expecting to leave Rome for a long time, and in fact about to leave it for ever, stood to witness the triumphal entry of Marcus Aurelius, almost at the exact spot from which he had watched the emperor's solemn return to the capital on his own first coming thither. His triumph was now a "full" one—*Justus Triumphus*—justified, by far more than the due amount of bloodshed in those Northern wars, at length, it might seem, happily at an end. Among the captives, amid the laughter of the crowds at his blowsy upper garment, his trousered legs and conical wolf-skin cap, walked our own ancestor, representative of subject Germany, under a figure very familiar in later Roman sculpture; and, though certainly with none of the grace of the *Dying Gaul*, yet with plenty of uncouth pathos in his misshapen features, and the pale, servile, yet angry eyes. His children, white-skinned and golden-haired "as angels", trudged beside him. His brothers, of the animal world, the ibex, the wild-cat, and the reindeer stalking and trumpeting grandly, found their due place in the procession; and among the spoil, set forth on a portable frame that it might be distinctly seen (no mere model, but the very house he had lived in), a wattled cottage, in all the simplicity of its snug contrivances against the cold, and well-calculated to give a moment's delight to his new, sophisticated masters.

Andrea Mantegna, working at the end of the fifteenth century, for a society full of antiquarian fervour at the sight of the earthy relics of the old Roman people, day by day returning to light out of the clay—childish still, moreover, and with no more suspicion of pasteboard than the old Romans themselves, in its unabashed love of open-air pageantries, has invested this, the greatest, and alas! the most characteristic, of the splendours of imperial Rome, with a reality livelier than any description. The homely sentiments for which he has found place in his learned paintings are hardly more lifelike than the great

public incidents of the show, there depicted. And then, with all that vivid realism, how refined, how dignified, how select in type, is this reflection of the old Roman world!—now especially, in its time-mellowed red and gold, for the modern visitor to the old English palace.

It was under no such selected types that the great procession presented itself to Marius; though, in effect, he found something there prophetic, so to speak, and evocative of ghosts, as susceptible minds will do, upon a repetition after long interval of some notable incident, which may yet perhaps have no direct concern for themselves. In truth, he had been so closely bent of late on certain very personal interests that the broad current of the world's doings seemed to have withdrawn into the distance, but now, as he witnessed this procession, to return once more into evidence for him. The world, certainly, had been holding on its old way, and was all its old self, as it thus passed by dramatically, accentuating, in this favourite spectacle, its mode of viewing things. And even apart from the contrast of a very different scene, he would have found it, just now, a somewhat vulgar spectacle. The temples, wide open, with their ropes of roses flapping in the wind against the rich, reflecting marble, their startling draperies and heavy cloud of incense, were but the centres of a great banquet spread through all the gaudily coloured streets of Rome, for which the carnivorous appetite of those who thronged them in the glare of the mid-day sun was frankly enough asserted. At best, they were but calling their gods to share with them the cooked, sacrificial, and other meats, reeking to the sky. The child, who was concerned for the sorrows of one of those Northern captives as he passed by, and explained to his comrade—"There's feeling in that hand, you know!" benumbed and lifeless as it looked in the chain, seemed, in a moment, to transform the entire show into its own proper tinsel. Yes! these Romans were a coarse, a vulgar people; and their vulgarities of soul in full evidence here. And Aurelius himself seemed to have undergone the world's coinage, and fallen to the level of his reward, in a mediocrity no longer golden.

Yet if, as he passed by, almost filling the quaint old circular chariot with his magnificent golden-flowered attire, he presented himself to Marius, chiefly as one who had made the great mistake; to the multitude he came as a more than magnanimous conqueror. That he had "forgiven" the innocent wife and children of the dashing and almost successful rebel Avidius Cassius, now no more, was a recent circumstance still in memory. As the children went past—not among those who, ere the emperor ascended the steps of the Capitol, would be detached from the great progress for execution, happy rather, and

radiant, as adopted members of the imperial family—the crowd actually enjoyed an exhibition of the *moral* order, such as might become perhaps the fashion. And it was in consideration of some possible touch of a heroism herein that might really have cost him something, that Marius resolved to seek the emperor once more, with an appeal for common-sense, for reason and justice.

He had set out at last to revisit his old home; and knowing that Aurelius was then in retreat at a favourite villa, which lay almost on his way thither, determined there to present himself. Although the great plain was dying steadily, a new race of wild birds establishing itself there, as he knew enough of their habits to understand, and the idle *contadino*, with his never-ending ditty of decay and death, replacing the lusty Roman labourer, never had that poetic region between Rome and the sea more deeply impressed him than on this sunless day of early autumn, under which all that fell within the immense horizon was presented in one uniform tone of a clear, penitential blue. Stimulating to the fancy as was that range of low hills to the northwards, already troubled with the upbreking of the Apennines, yet a want of quiet in their outline, the record of wild fracture there, of sudden upheaval and depression, marked them as but the ruins of nature; while at every little descent and ascent of the road might be noted traces of the abandoned work of man. From time to time, the way was still redolent of the floral relics of summer, daphne and myrtle-blossom, sheltered in the little hollows and ravines. At last, amid rocks here and there piercing the soil, as those descents became steeper, and the main line of the Apennines, now visible, gave a higher accent to the scene, he espied over the *plateau*, almost like one of those broken hills, cutting the horizon towards the sea. the old brown villa itself, rich in memories of one after another of the family of the Antonines. As he approached it, such reminiscences crowded upon him, above all of the life there of the aged Antoninus Pius, in its wonderful mansuetude and calm. Death had overtaken him here at the precise moment when the tribune of the watch had received from his lips the word *Aequanimitas!* as the watchword of the night. To see their emperor living there like one of his simplest subjects, his hands red at vintage-time with the juice of the grapes, hunting, teaching his children, starting betimes, with all who cared to join him, for long days of antiquarian research in the country around:—this, and the like of this, had seemed to mean the peace of mankind.

Upon that had come—like a stain! it seemed to Marius just then—the more intimate life of Faustina, the life of Faustina at home. Surely, that marvellous but malign beauty must still haunt those rooms, like an

unquiet, dead goddess, who might have perhaps, after all, something reassuring to tell surviving mortals about her ambiguous self. When, two years since, the news had reached Rome that those eyes, always so persistently turned to vanity, had suddenly closed for ever, a strong desire to pray had come over Marius, as he followed in fancy on its wild way the soul of one he had spoken with now and again, and whose presence in it for a time the world of art could so ill have spared. Certainly, the honours freely accorded to embalm her memory were poetic enough—the rich temple left among those wild villagers at the spot, now it was hoped sacred for ever, where she had breathed her last; the golden image, in her old place at the amphitheatre; the altar at which the newly married might make their sacrifice; above all, the great foundation for orphan girls, to be called after her name.

The latter, precisely, was the cause why Marius failed in fact to see Aurelius again, and make the chivalrous effort at enlightenment he had proposed to himself. Entering the villa, he learned from an usher, at the door of the long gallery, famous still for its grand prospect in the memory of many a visitor, and then leading to the imperial apartments, that the emperor was already in audience: Marius must await his turn—he knew not how long it might be. An odd audience it seemed; for at that moment, through the closed door, came shouts of laughter, the laughter of a great crowd of children—the “Faustian Children” themselves, as he afterwards learned—happy and at their ease, in the imperial presence. Uncertain, then, of the time for which so pleasant a reception might last, so pleasant that he would hardly have wished to shorten it, Marius finally determined to proceed, as it was necessary that he should accomplish the first stage of his journey on this day. The thing was not to be—*Vale! anima infelicissima!*—He might at least carry away that sound of the laughing orphan children, as a not unamiable last impression of kings and their houses.

The place he was now about to visit, especially as the resting-place of his dead, had never been forgotten. Only, the first eager period of his life in Rome had slipped on rapidly; and, almost on a sudden, that old time had come to seem very long ago. An almost burdensome solemnity had grown about his memory of the place, so that to revisit it seemed a thing that needed preparation: it was what he could not have done hastily. He half feared to lessen, or disturb, its value for himself. And then, as he travelled leisurely towards it, and so far with quite tranquil mind, interested also in many another place by the way, he discovered a shorter road to the end of his journey, and found himself indeed approaching the spot that was to him like no other. Dreaming now only of the dead before him, he journeyed on rapidly through the night; the thought of them increasing on him,

in the darkness. It was as if they had been waiting for him there through all those years, and felt his footsteps approaching now, and understood his devotion, quite gratefully, in that lowliness of theirs, in spite of its tardy fulfilment. As morning came, his late tranquillity of mind had given way to a grief which surprised him by its freshness. He was moved more than he could have thought possible by so distant a sorrow. "*To-day!*"—they seemed to be saying as the hard dawn broke,—"*To-day, he will come!*" At last, amid all his distractions, they were become the main purpose of what he was then doing. The world around it, when he actually reached the place later in the day, was in a mood very different from his:—so work-a-day, it seemed, on that fine afternoon, and the villages he passed through so silent; the inhabitants being, for the most part, at their labour in the country. Then, at length, above the tiled outbuildings, were the walls of the old villa itself, with the tower for the pigeons; and, not among cypresses, but half-hidden by aged poplar-trees, their leaves like golden fruit, the birds floating around it, the conical roof of the tomb itself. In the presence of an old servant who remembered him, the great seals were broken, the rusty key turned at last in the lock, the door was forced out among the weeds grown thickly about it, and Marius was actually in the place which had been so often in his thoughts.

He was struck, not however without a touch of remorse thereupon, chiefly by an odd air of neglect, the neglect of a place allowed to remain as when it was last used, and left in a hurry, till long years had covered all alike with thick dust—the faded flowers, the burnt-out lamps, the tools and hardened mortar of the workmen who had had something to do there. A heavy fragment of woodwork had fallen and chipped open one of the oldest of the mortuary urns, many hundreds in number ranged around the walls. It was not properly an urn, but a minute coffin of stone, and the fracture had revealed a piteous spectacle of the mouldering, unburned remains within; the bones of a child, as he understood, which might have died, in ripe age, three times over, since it slipped away from among his great-grandfathers, so far up in the line. Yet the protruding baby hand seemed to stir up in him feelings vivid enough, bringing him intimately within the scope of dead people's grievances. He noticed, side by side with the urn of his mother, that of a boy of about his own age—one of the serving-boys of the household—who had descended hither, from the lightsome world of childhood, almost at the same time with her. It seemed as if this boy of his own age had taken filial place beside her there, in his stead. That hard feeling, again, which had always lingered in his mind with the thought of the father he had scarcely known, melted wholly away, as he read

the precise number of his years, and reflected suddenly—He was of my own present age; no hard old man, but with interests, as he looked round him on the world for the last time, even as mine to-day! And with that came a blinding rush of kindness, as if two alienated friends had come to understand each other at last. There was weakness in all this; as there is in all care for dead persons, to which nevertheless people will always yield in proportion as they really care for one another. With a vain yearning, as he stood there, still to be able to do something for them, he reflected that such doing must be, after all, in the nature of things, mainly for himself. His own epitaph might be that old one—"Ἐσχάτος τοῦ Ἰδίου γένους—*He was the last of his race!* Of those who might come hither after himself probably no one would ever again come quite as he had done to-day; and it was under the influence of this thought that he determined to bury all that, deep below the surface, to be remembered only by him, and in a way which would claim no sentiment from the indifferent. That took many days—was like a renewal of lengthy old burial rites—as he himself watched the work, early and late; coming on the last day very early, and anticipating, by stealth, the last touches, while the workmen were absent; one young lad only, finally smoothing down the earthy bed, greatly surprised at the seriousness with which Marius flung in his flowers, one by one, to mingle with the dark mould.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANIMA NATURALITER CHRISTIANA

THOSE eight days at his old home, so mournfully occupied, had been for Marius in some sort a forcible disruption from the world and the roots of his life in it. He had been carried out of himself as never before; and when the time was over, it was as if the claim over him of the earth below had been vindicated, over against the interests of that living world around. Dead, yet sentient and caressing hands seemed to reach out of the ground and to be clinging about him. Looking back sometimes now, from about the midway of life—the age, as he conceived, at which one begins to re-descend one's life—though antedating it a little, in his sad humour, he would note, almost with surprise, the unbroken placidity of the contemplation in which it had been passed. His own temper, his early theoretic scheme of things, would have pushed him on to movement and adventure. Actually, as circumstances had determined, all its movement had been

inward; movement of observation only, or even of pure meditation; in part, perhaps, because throughout it had been something of a *meditatio mortis*, ever facing towards the act of final detachment. Death, however, as he reflected, must be for every one nothing less than the fifth or last act of a drama, and, as such, was likely to have something of the stirring character of a *dénouement*. And, in fact, it was in form tragic enough that his end not long afterwards came to him.

In the midst of the extreme weariness and depression which had followed those last days, Cornelius, then, as it happened, on a journey and travelling near the place, finding traces of him, had become his guest at White-nights. It was just then that Marius felt, as he had never done before, the value to himself, the overpowering charm, of his friendship. "More than brother!"—he felt—"like a son also!" contrasting the fatigue of soul which made himself in effect an older man, with the irrepressible youth of his companion. For it was still the marvellous hopefulness of Cornelius, his seeming prerogative over the future, that determined, and kept alive, all other sentiment concerning him. A new hope had sprung up in the world of which he, Cornelius, was a depositary, which he was to bear onward in it. Identifying himself with Cornelius in so dear a friendship, through him, Marius seemed to touch, to ally himself to, actually to become a possessor of the coming world; even as happy parents reach out, and take possession of it, in and through the survival of their children. For in these days their intimacy had grown very close, as they moved hither and thither, leisurely, among the country-places thereabout, Cornelius being on his way back to Rome, till they came one evening to a little town (Marius remembered that he had been there on his first journey to Rome) which had even then its church and legend—the legend and holy relics of the martyr Hyacinthus, a young Roman soldier, whose blood had stained the soil of this place in the reign of the emperor Trajan.

The thought of that so recent death, haunted Marius through the night, as if with audible crying and sighs above the restless wind, which came and went around their lodging. But towards dawn he slept heavily; and awaking in broad daylight, and finding Cornelius absent, set forth to seek him. The plague was still in the place—had indeed just broken out afresh; with an outbreak also of cruel superstition among its wild and miserable inhabitants. Surely, the old gods were wroth at the presence of this new enemy among them! And it was no ordinary morning into which Marius stepped forth. There was a menace in the dark masses of hill, and motionless wood, against the gray, although apparently unclouded sky. Under this sunless

heaven the earth itself seemed to fret and fume with a heat of its own, in spite of the strong night-wind. And now the wind had fallen. Marius felt that he breathed some strange heavy fluid, denser than any common air. He could have fancied that the world had sunken in the night, far below its proper level, into some close, thick abysm of its own atmosphere. The Christian people of the town, hardly less terrified and overwrought by the haunting sickness about them than their pagan neighbours, were at prayer before the tomb of the martyr; and even as Marius pressed among them to a place beside Cornelius, on a sudden the hills seemed to roll like a sea in motion, around the whole compass of the horizon. For a moment Marius supposed himself attacked with some sudden sickness of brain, till the fall of a great mass of building convinced him that not himself but the earth under his feet was giddy. A few moments later the little market-place was alive with the rush of the distracted inhabitants from their tottering houses; and as they waited anxiously for the second shock of earthquake, a long-smouldering suspicion leapt precipitately into well-defined purpose, and the whole body of people was carried forward towards the band of worshippers below. An hour later, in the wild tumult which followed, the earth had been stained afresh with the blood of the martyrs Felix and Faustinus—*Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra!*—and their brethren, together with Cornelius and Marius, thus, as it had happened, taken among them, were prisoners, reserved for the action of the law. Marius and his friend, with certain others, exercising the privilege of their rank, made claim to be tried in Rome, or at least in the chief town of the district; where, indeed, in the troublous days that had now begun, a legal process had been already instituted. Under the care of a military guard the captives were removed on the same day, one stage of their journey; sleeping, for security, during the night, side by side with their keepers, in the rooms of a shepherd's deserted house by the wayside.

It was surmised that one of the prisoners was not a Christian: the guards were forward to make the utmost pecuniary profit of this circumstance, and in the night, Marius, taking advantage of the loose charge kept over them, and by means partly of a large bribe, had contrived that Cornelius, as the really innocent person, should be dismissed in safety on his way, to procure, as Marius explained, the proper means of defence for himself, when the time of trial came.

And in the morning Cornelius in fact set forth alone, from their miserable place of detention. Marius believed that Cornelius was to be the husband of Cecilia; and that, perhaps strangely, had but added to the desire to get him away safely.—We wait for the great crisis which is to try what is in us: we can hardly bear the pressure of our

hearts, as we think of it: the lonely wrestler, or victim, which imagination foreshadows to us, can hardly be one's self; it seems an outrage of our destiny that we should be led along so gently and imperceptibly, to so terrible a leaping-place in the dark, for more perhaps than life or death. At last, the great act, the critical moment itself comes, easily, almost unconsciously. Another motion of the clock, and our fatal line—the "great climacteric point"—has been passed, which changes ourselves or our lives. In one quarter of an hour, under a sudden, uncontrollable impulse, hardly weighing what he did, almost as a matter of course and as lightly as one hires a bed for one's night's rest on a journey, Marius had taken upon himself all the heavy risk of the position in which Cornelius had then been—the long and wearisome delays of judgment, which were possible; the danger and wretchedness of a long journey in this manner; possibly the danger of death. He had delivered his brother, after the manner he had sometimes vaguely anticipated as a kind of distinction in his destiny; though indeed always with wistful calculation as to what it might cost him: and in the first moment after the thing was actually done, he felt only satisfaction at his courage, at the discovery of his possession of "nerve".

Yet he was, as we know, no hero, no heroic martyr—had indeed no right to be; and when he had seen Cornelius depart, on his blithe and hopeful way, as he believed, to become the husband of Cecilia; actually, as it had happened, without a word of farewell, supposing Marius was almost immediately afterwards to follow (Marius indeed having avoided the moment of leave-taking with its possible call for an explanation of the circumstances) the reaction came. He could only guess, of course, at what might really happen. So far, he had but taken upon himself, in the stead of Cornelius, a certain amount of personal risk; though he hardly supposed himself to be facing the danger of death. Still, especially for one such as he, with all the sensibilities of which his whole manner of life had been but a promotion, the situation of a person under trial on a criminal charge was actually full of distress. To him, in truth, a death such as the recent death of those saintly brothers, seemed no glorious end. In his case, at least, the Martyrdom, as it was called—the overpowering act of testimony that Heaven had come down among men—would be but a common execution: from the drops of his blood there would spring no miraculous, poetic flowers; no eternal aroma would indicate the place of his burial; no plenary grace, overflowing for ever upon those who might stand around it. Had there been one to listen just then, there would have come, from the very depth of his desolation, an eloquent utterance at last, on the irony of men's

fates, on the singular accidents of life and death.

The guards, now safely in possession of whatever money and other valuables the prisoners had had on them, pressed them forward, over the rough mountain paths, altogether careless of their sufferings. The great autumn rains were falling. At night the soldiers lighted a fire; but it was impossible to keep warm. From time to time they stopped to roast portions of the meat they carried with them, making their captives sit round the fire, and pressing it upon them. But weariness and depression of spirits had deprived Marius of appetite, even if the food had been more attractive, and for some days he partook of nothing but bad bread and water. All through the dark mornings they dragged over boggy plains, up and down hills, wet through sometimes with the heavy rain. Even in those deplorable circumstances, he could but notice the wild, dark beauty of those regions—the stormy sunrise, and placid spaces of evening. One of the keepers, a very young soldier, won him at times, by his simple kindness, to talk a little, with wonder at the lad's half-conscious, poetic delight in the adventures of the journey. At times, the whole company would lie down for rest at the roadside, hardly sheltered from the storm; and in the deep fatigue of his spirit, his old longing for inopportune sleep overpowered him.—Sleep anywhere, and under any conditions, seemed just then a thing one might well exchange the remnants of one's life for.

It must have been about the fifth night, as he afterwards conjectured, that the soldiers, believing him likely to die, had finally left him unable to proceed further, under the care of some country people, who to the extent of their power certainly treated him kindly in his sickness. He awoke to consciousness after a severe attack of fever, lying alone on a rough bed, in a kind of hut. It seemed a remote, mysterious place, as he looked around in the silence; but so fresh—lying, in fact, in a high pasture-land among the mountains—that he felt he should recover, if he might but just lie there in quiet long enough. Even during those nights of delirium he had felt the scent of the new-mown hay pleasantly, with a dim sense for a moment that he was lying safe in his old home. The sunlight lay clear beyond the open door; and the sounds of the cattle reached him softly from the green places around. Recalling confusedly the torturing hurry of his late journeys, he dreaded, as his consciousness of the whole situation returned, the coming of the guards. But the place remained in absolute stillness. He was, in fact, at liberty, but for his own disabled condition. And it was certainly a genuine clinging to life that he felt just then, at the very bottom of his mind. So it had been, obscurely, even through all the wild fancies of his delirium, from

the moment which followed his decision against himself, in favour of Cornelius.

The occupants of the place were to be heard presently, coming and going about him on their business: and it was as if the approach of death brought out in all their force the merely human sentiments. There is that in death which certainly makes indifferent persons anxious to forget the dead: to put them—those aliens—away out of their thoughts altogether, as soon as may be. Conversely, in the deep isolation of spirit which was now creeping upon Marius, the faces of these people, casually visible, took a strange hold on his affections; the link of general brotherhood, the feeling of human kinship, asserting itself most strongly when it was about to be severed for ever. At nights he would find this face or that impressed deeply on his fancy; and, in a troubled sort of manner, his mind would follow them onwards, on the ways of their simple, humdrum, everyday life, with a peculiar yearning to share it with them, envying the calm, earthy cheerfulness of all their days to be, still under the sun, though so indifferent, of course, to him!—as if these rude people had been suddenly lifted into some height of earthly good-fortune, which must needs isolate them from himself.

Tristem neminem fecit—he repeated to himself; his old prayer shaping itself now almost as his epitaph. Yes! so much the very hardest judge must concede to him. And the sense of satisfaction which that thought left with him disposed him to a conscious effort of recollection, while he lay there, unable now even to raise his head, as he discovered on attempting to reach a pitcher of water which stood near. Revelation, vision, the discovery of a vision, the *seeing* of a perfect humanity, in a perfect world—through all his alternations of mind, by some dominant instinct, determined by the original necessities of his own nature and character, he had always set that above the *having*, or even the *doing*, of anything. For, such vision, if received with due attitude on his part, was, in reality, the *being* something, and as such was surely a pleasant offering or sacrifice to whatever gods there might be, observant of him. And how goodly had the vision been!—one long unfolding of beauty and energy in things, upon the closing of which he might gratefully utter his "*Vixi!*" Even then, just ere his eyes were to be shut for ever, the things they had seen seemed a veritable possession in hand; the persons, the places, above all, the touching image of Jesus, apprehended dimly through the expressive faces, the crying of the children, in that mysterious drama, with a sudden sense of peace and satisfaction now, which he could not explain to himself. Surely, he had prospered in life! And again, as of old, the sense of gratitude seemed to bring with it the sense also of a living person at his side.

For still, in a shadowy world, his deeper wisdom had ever been, with a sense of economy, with a jealous estimate of gain and loss, to use life, not as the means to some problematic end, but, as far as might be, from dying hour to dying hour, an end in itself—a kind of music, all-sufficing to the duly trained ear, even as it died out on the air. Yet now, aware still in that suffering body of such vivid powers of mind and sense, as he anticipated from time to time how his sickness, practically without aid as he must be in this rude place, was likely to end, and that the moment of taking final account was drawing very near, a consciousness of waste would come, with half-angry tears of self-pity, in his great weakness—a blind, outraged, angry feeling of wasted power such as he might have experienced himself standing by the deathbed of another, in condition like his own.

And yet it was the fact, again, that the vision of men and things, actually revealed to him on his way through the world, had developed, with a wonderful largeness, the faculties to which it addressed itself, his general capacity of vision; and in that too was a success, in the view of certain, very definite, well-considered, undeniable possibilities. Throughout that elaborate and lifelong education of his receptive powers, he had ever kept in view the purpose of preparing himself towards possible further revelation some day—towards some ampler vision, which should take up into itself and explain this world's delightful shows, as the scattered fragments of a poetry, till then but half-understood, might be taken up into the text of a lost epic, recovered at last. At this moment, his unclouded receptivity of soul, grown so steadily through all those years, from experience to experience, was at its height; the house ready for the possible guest; the tablet of the mind white and smooth, for whatsoever divine fingers might choose to write there. And was not this precisely the condition, the attitude of mind, to which something higher than he, yet akin to him, would be likely to reveal itself; to which that influence he had felt now and again like a friendly hand upon his shoulder, amid the actual obscurities of the world, would be likely to make a further explanation? Surely, the aim of a true philosophy must lie, not in futile efforts towards the complete accommodation of man to the circumstances in which he chances to find himself, but in the maintenance of a kind of candid discontent, in the face of the very highest achievement; the unclouded and receptive soul quitting the world finally, with the same fresh wonder with which it had entered the world still unimpaired, and going on its blind way at last with the consciousness of some profound enigma in things, as but a pledge of something further to come. Marius seemed to understand how one might look back upon life here, and its excellent visions, as but the portion of a racecourse left behind him by a runner still swift of

foot: for a moment, he experienced a singular curiosity, almost an ardent desire to enter upon a future, the possibilities of which seemed so large.

And just then, again amid the memory of certain touching actual words and images, came the thought of the great hope, that hope against hope, which, as he conceived, had arisen—*Lux sedentibus in tenebris*—upon the aged world; the hope Cornelius had seemed to bear away upon him in his strength, with a buoyancy which had caused Marius to feel, not so much that by a caprice of destiny, he had been left to die in his place, as that Cornelius was gone on a mission to deliver him also from death. There had been a permanent protest established in the world, a plea, a perpetual afterthought, which humanity henceforth would ever possess in reserve, against any wholly mechanical and disheartening theory of itself and its conditions. That was a thought which relieved for him the iron outline of the horizon about him, touching it as if with soft light from beyond; filling the shadowy, hollow places to which he was on his way with the warmth of definite affections; confirming also certain considerations by which he seemed to link himself to the generations to come in the world he was leaving. Yes! through the survival of their children, happy parents are able to think calmly, and with a very practical affection, of a world in which they are to have no direct share; planting with a cheerful good-humour, the acorns they carry about with them, that their grandchildren may be shaded from the sun by the broad oak-trees of the future. That is nature's way of easing death to us. It was thus too, surprised, delighted, that Marius, under the power of that new hope among men, could think of the generations to come after him. Without it, dim in truth as it was, he could hardly have dared to ponder the world which limited all he really knew, as it would be when he should have departed from it. A strange lonesomeness, like physical darkness, seemed to settle upon the thought of it; as if its business hereafter must be, as far as he was concerned, carried on in some inhabited, but distant and alien, star. Contrariwise, with the sense of that hope warm about him, he seemed to anticipate some kindly care for himself, never to fail even on earth, a care for his very body—that dear sister and companion of his soul, outworn, suffering, and in the very article of death, as it was now.

For the weariness came back tenfold; and he had finally to abstain from thoughts like these, as from what caused physical pain. And then, as before in the wretched, sleepless nights of those forced marches, he would try to fix his mind, as it were impassively, and like a child thinking over the toys it loves, one after another, that it may fall asleep thus, and forget all about them the sooner, on all the persons he had loved in life—on his love for them, dead or living, grateful for his love or not,

rather than on theirs for him—letting their images pass away again, or rest with him, as they would. In the bare sense of having loved he seemed to find, even amid this foundering of the ship, that on which his soul might “assuredly rest and depend”. One after another, he suffered those faces and voices to come and go, as in some mechanical exercise, as he might have repeated all the verses he knew by heart, or like the telling of beads one by one, with many a sleepy and between-whiles.

For there remained also, for the old earthy creature still within him, that great blessedness of physical slumber. To sleep, to lose one's self in sleep—that, as he had always recognised, was a good thing. And it was after a space of deep sleep that he awoke amid the murmuring voices of the people who had kept and tended him so carefully through his sickness, now kneeling around his bed: and what he heard confirmed, in the then perfect clearness of his soul, the inevitable suggestion of his own bodily feelings. He had often dreamt he was condemned to die, that the hour, with wild thoughts of escape, was arrived; and waking, with the sun all around him, in complete liberty of life, had been full of gratitude for his place there, alive still, in the land of the living. He read surely, now, in the manner, the doings, of these people, some of whom were passing out through the doorway, where the heavy sunlight in very deed lay, that his last morning was come, and turned to think once more of the beloved. Often had he fancied of old that not to die on a dark or rainy day might itself have a little alleviating grace or favour about it. The people around his bed were praying fervently—*Abi! Abi! Anima Christiana!* In the moments of his extreme helplessness their mystic bread had been placed, had descended like a snow-flake from the sky, between his lips. Gentle fingers had applied to hands and feet, to all those old passage-ways of the senses, through which the world had come and gone for him, now so dim and obstructed, a medicinale oil. It was the same people who, in the gray, austere evening of that day, took up his remains, and buried them secretly, with their accustomed prayers; but with joy also, holding his death, according to their generous view in this matter, to have been of the nature of a martyrdom; and martyrdom, as the church had always said, a kind of sacrament with plenary grace.

GREECE

THE BACCHANALS OF EURIPIDES
LACEDÆMON

THE BACCHANALS OF EURIPIDES

So far, I have endeavoured to present with something of the concrete character of a picture, Dionysus, the old Greek god, as we may discern him through a multitude of stray hints in art and poetry and religious custom, through modern speculation on the tendencies of early thought, through traits and touches in our own actual states of mind, which may seem sympathetic with those tendencies. In such a picture there must necessarily be a certain artificiality; things near and far, matter of varying degrees of certainty, fact and surmise, being reflected and concentrated, for its production, as if on the surface of a mirror. Such concrete character, however, Greek poet or sculptor, from time to time, impressed on the vague world of popular belief and usage around him; and in the *Bacchanals* of Euripides we have an example of the figurative or imaginative power of poetry, selecting and combining, at will, from that mixed and floating mass, weaving the many-coloured threads together, blending the various phases of legend—all the light and shade of the subject—into a shape, substantial and firmly set, through which a mere fluctuating tradition might retain a permanent place in men's imaginations. Here, in what Euripides really says, in what we actually see on the stage, as we read his play, we are dealing with a single real object, not with uncertain effects of many half-fancied objects. Let me leave you for a time almost wholly in his hands, while you look very closely at his work, so as to discriminate its outlines clearly.

This tragedy of the *Bacchanals*—a sort of masque or morality, as we say—a monument as central for the legend of Dionysus as the Homeric hymn for that of Demeter, is unique in Greek literature, and has also a singular interest in the life of Euripides himself. He is writing in old age (the piece was not played till after his death) not at Athens, nor for a polished Attic audience, but for a wilder and less temperately cultivated sort of people, at the court of Archelaus, in Macedonia. Writing in old age, he is in that subdued mood, a mood not necessarily sordid, in which (the shudder at the nearer approach of the unknown world coming over him more frequently than of old) accustomed ideas, conformable to a sort of common sense regarding the unseen, oftentimes regain what they may have lost, in a man's allegiance. It is a sort of madness, he begins to think, to differ from the received opinions thereon. Not that he is insincere

or ironical, but that he tends, in the sum of probabilities, to dwell on their more peaceful side; to sit quiet, for the short remaining time, in the reflexion of the more cheerfully lighted side of things; and what is accustomed—what holds of familiar usage—comes to seem the whole essence of wisdom, on all subjects; and the well-known delineation of the vague country, in Homer or Hesiod, one's best attainable mental outfit, for the journey thither. With this sort of quiet wisdom the whole play is penetrated. Euripides has said, or seemed to say, many things concerning Greek religion, at variance with received opinion; and now, in the end of life, he desires to make his peace—what shall at any rate be peace with men. He is in the mood for acquiescence, or even for a palinode; and this takes the direction, partly of mere submission to, partly of a refining upon, the authorised religious tradition; he calmly sophisticates this or that element of it which had seemed grotesque; and has, like any modern writer, a theory how myths were made, and how in lapse of time their first signification gets to be obscured among mortals; and what he submits to, that he will also adorn fondly, by his genius for words.

And that very neighbourhood afforded him his opportunity. It was in the neighbourhood of Pella, the Macedonian capital, that the worship of Dionysus, the newest of the gods, prevailed in its most extravagant form—the *Thiasus*, or wild, nocturnal procession of Bacchic women, retired to the woods and hills for that purpose, with its accompaniments of music, and lights, and dancing. Rational and moderate Athenians, as we may gather from some admissions of Euripides himself, somewhat despised all that; while those who were more fanatical forsook the home celebrations, and went on pilgrimage from Attica to Cithæron or Delphi. But, at Pella persons of high birth took part in the exercise, and at a later period we read in Plutarch how Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, was devoted to this enthusiastic worship. Although in one of Botticelli's pictures the angels dance very sweetly, and may represent many circumstances actually recorded in the Hebrew scriptures, yet we hardly understand the dance as a religious ceremony; the bare mention of it sets us thinking on some fundamental differences between the pagan religions and our own. It is to such ecstasies, however, that all nature-worship seems to tend; that giddy, intoxicating sense of spring—that tingling in the veins, sympathetic with the yearning life of the earth, having, apparently, in all times and places, prompted some mode of wild dancing. Coleridge, in one of his fantastic speculations, refining on the German word for enthusiasm—*Schwärmererei*, swarming, as he says, "like the swarming of bees together"—has explained how the

sympathies of mere numbers, as such, the random catching on fire of one here and another there, when people are collected together, generates as if by mere contact, some new and rapturous spirit, not traceable in the individual units of a multitude. Such *swarming* was the essence of that strange dance of the Bacchic women: literally like winged things, they follow, with motives, we may suppose, never quite made clear even to themselves, their new, strange, romantic god. Himself a woman-like god,—it was on women and feminine souls that his power mainly fell. At Elis, it was the women who had their own little song with which at spring-time they professed to call him from the sea: at Braisæ they had their own temple where none but women might enter; and so the *Thiasus*, also, is almost exclusively formed of women—of those who experience most directly the influence of things which touch thought through the senses—the presence of night, the expectation of morning, the nearness of wild, unsophisticated, natural things—the echoes, the coolness, the noise of frightened creatures as they climbed through the darkness, the sunrise seen from the hill-tops, the disillusion, the bitterness of satiety, the deep slumber which comes with the morning. Athenians visiting the Macedonian capital would hear, and from time to time actually see, something of a religious custom, in which the habit of an earlier world might seem to survive. As they saw the lights flitting over the mountains, and heard the wild, sharp cries of the women, there was presented, as a singular fact in the more prosaic actual life of a later time, an enthusiasm otherwise relegated to the wonderland of a distant past, in which a supposed primitive harmony and understanding between man and nature renewed itself. Later sisters of Centaur and Amazon, the Mænads, as they beat the earth in strange sympathy with its waking up from sleep, or as, in the description of the Messenger, in the play of Euripides, they lie sleeping in the glen, revealed among the morning mists, were themselves indeed as remnants—flocks left here and there and not yet quite evaporated under the hard light of a later and commoner day—of a certain cloud-world which had once covered all things with a veil of mystery. Whether or not, in what was often probably coarse as well as extravagant, there may have lurked some finer vein of ethical symbolism, such as Euripides hints at—the soberer influence, in the *Thiasus*, of keen air and animal expansion, certainly, for art, and a poetry delighting in colour and form, it was a custom rich in suggestion. The imitative arts would draw from it altogether new motives of freedom and energy, of freshness in old forms. It is from this fantastic scene that the beautiful wind-touched draperies, the rhythm, the heads suddenly thrown back, of many a Pompeian wall-painting and sarcophagus-

frieze are originally derived; and that melting languor, that perfectly composed lassitude of the fallen Mænad, became a fixed type in the school of grace, the school of Praxiteles.

The circumstances of the place thus combining with his peculiar motive, Euripides writes the *Bacchanals*. It is this extravagant phase of religion, and the latest-born of the gods, which as an *amende honorable* to the once slighted traditions of Greek belief, he undertakes to interpret to an audience composed of people who, like Scyles, the Hellenising king of Scythia, feel the attraction of Greek religion and Greek usage, but on their quainter side, and partly relish that extravagance. Subject and audience alike stimulate the romantic temper, and the tragedy of the *Bacchanals*, with its innovations in metre and diction, expressly noted as foreign or barbarous—all the charm and grace of the clear-pitched singing of the chorus, notwithstanding—with its subtleties and sophistications, its grotesques, mingled with and heightening a real shudder at the horror of the theme, and a peculiarly fine and human pathos, is almost wholly without the reassuring calm, generally characteristic of the endings of Greek tragedy: is itself excited, troubled, disturbing—a spotted or dappled thing, like the oddly dappled fawn-skins of its own masquerade, so aptly expressive of the shifty, twofold, rapidly-doubling genius of the divine, wild creature himself. Let us listen and watch the strange masks coming and going, for a while, as far as may be as we should do with a modern play. What are its charms? What is still alive, impressive, and really poetical for us, in the dim old Greek play?

The scene is laid at Thebes, where the memory of Semele, the mother of Dionysus, is still under a cloud. Her own sisters, sinning against natural affection, pitiless over her pathetic death and finding in it only a judgment upon the impiety with which, having shamed herself with some mortal lover, she had thrown the blame of her sin upon Zeus, have, so far, triumphed over her. The true and glorious version of her story lives only in the subdued memory of the two aged men. Teiresias the prophet, and her father Cadmus, apt now to let things go loosely by, who has delegated his royal power to Pentheus, the son of one of those sisters—a hot-headed and impious youth. So things had passed at Thebes; and now a strange circumstance has happened. An odd sickness has fallen upon the women: Dionysus has sent the sting of his enthusiasm upon them, and has pushed it to a sort of madness, a madness which imitates the true *Thiasus*. Forced to have the form without the profit of his worship, the whole female population, leaving distaff and spindle, and headed by the three princesses, have deserted the town, and are lying encamped on the bare rocks, or under the pines, among the solitudes of Cithæron.

And it is just at this point that the divine child, supposed to have perished at his mother's side in the flames, returns to his birthplace, grown to manhood.

Dionysus himself speaks the prologue. He is on a journey through the world to found a new religion; and the first motive of this new religion is the vindication of the memory of his mother. In explaining this design, Euripides, who seeks always for pathetic effect, tells in few words, touching because simple, the story of Semele—here, and again still more intensely in the chorus which follows—the merely human sentiment of maternity being not forgotten, even amid the thought of the divine embraces of her fiery bed-fellow. It is out of tenderness for her that the son's divinity is to be revealed. A yearning affection, the affection with which we see him lifting up his arms about her, satisfied at last, on an old Etruscan metal mirror, has led him from place to place: everywhere he has had his dances and established his worship; and everywhere his presence has been her justification. First of all the towns in Greece he comes to Thebes, the scene of all her sorrows: he is standing beside the sacred waters of Dirce and Ismenus: the holy place is in sight: he hears the Greek speech, and sees at last the ruins of the place of her lying-in, at once his own birth-chamber and his mother's tomb. His image, as it detaches itself little by little from the episodes of the play, and is further characterised by the songs of the chorus, has a singular completeness of symbolical effect. The incidents of a fully developed human personality are superinduced on the mystical and abstract essence of that fiery spirit in the flowing veins of the earth—the aroma of the green world is retained in the fair human body, set forth in all sorts of finer ethical lights and shades—with a wonderful kind of subtlety. In the course of his long progress from land to land, the gold, the flowers, the incense of the East, have attached themselves deeply to him, their effect and expression rest now upon his flesh like the gleaming of that old ambrosial ointment of which Homer speaks as resting ever on the person of the gods, and cling to his clothing—the mitre binding his perfumed yellow hair—the long tunic down to the white feet, somewhat womanly, and the fawn-skin, with its rich spots, wrapped about the shoulders. As the door opens to admit him, the scented air of the vineyards (for the vine-blossom has an exquisite perfume) blows through; while the convolvulus on his mystic rod represents all wreathing flowery things whatever, with or without fruit, as in America all such plants are still called *vines*. "Sweet upon the mountains," the excitement of which he loves so deeply and to which he constantly invites his followers—"sweet upon the mountains," and profoundly amorous, his presence embodies all the voluptuous

abundance of Asia, its beating sun, its "fair-towered cities, full of inhabitants", which the chorus describe in their luscious vocabulary, with the rich Eastern names—Lydia, Persia, Arabia Felix: he is a sorcerer or an enchanter, the tyrant Pentheus thinks: the springs of water, the flowing of honey and milk and wine, are his miracles, wrought in person.

We shall see presently how, writing for that northern audience, Euripides crosses the Theban with the gloomier Thracian legend, and lets the darker stain show through. Yet, from the first, amid all this floweriness, a touch or trace of that gloom is discernible. The fawn-skin, composed now so daintily over the shoulders, may be worn with the whole coat of the animal made up, the hoofs gilded and tied together over the right shoulder, to leave the right arm disengaged to strike, its head clothing the human head within, as Alexander, on some of his coins, looks out from the elephant's scalp, and Hercules out of the jaws of a lion, on the coins of Camarina. Those diminutive golden horns attached to the forehead, represent not fecundity merely, nor merely the crisp tossing of the waves of streams, but horns of offence. And our fingers must beware of the *thyrsus*, tossed about so wantonly by himself and his chorus. The pine-cone at its top does but cover a spear-point; and the thing is a weapon—the sharp spear of the hunter Zagreus—though hidden now by the fresh leaves, and that button of pine-cone (useful also to dip in wine, to check the sweetness) which he has plucked down, coming through the forest, at peace for a while this spring morning.

And the chorus emphasises this character, their songs weaving for the whole piece, in words more effective than any painted scenery, a certain congruous background which heightens all; the intimate sense of mountains and mountain things being in this way maintained throughout, and concentrated on the central figure. "He is sweet among the mountains," they say, "when he drops down upon the plain, out of his mystic musings"—and we may think we see the green festoons of the vine dropping quickly, from foot-place to foot-place, down the broken hillside in spring, when like the Bacchanals, all who can, wander out of the town to enjoy the earliest heats. "Let us go out into the fields," we say; a strange madness seems to lurk among the flowers, ready to lay hold on us also; ἀντίχα γὰρ πᾶσα χορεύουσι—soon the whole earth will dance and sing.

Dionysus is especially a women's deity, and he comes from the east conducted by a chorus of gracious Lydian women, his true sisters—Bassarids, clad like himself in the long tunic, or *bassara*. They move and speak to the music of clangorous metallic instruments, cymbals and tambourines, relieved by the clearer notes of the pipe;

and there is a strange variety of almost imitative sounds for such music, in their very words. The Homeric hymn to Demeter precedes the art of sculpture, but is rich in suggestions for it; here, on the contrary, in the first chorus of the *Bacchanals*, as elsewhere in the play, we feel that the poetry of Euripides is probably borrowing something from art; that in these choruses, with their repetitions and refrains, he is reproducing perhaps the spirit of some sculptured relief which, like Luca della Robbia's celebrated work for the organ-loft of the cathedral of Florence, worked by various subtleties of line, not in the lips and eyes only, but in the draperies and hands also, to a strange reality of impression of musical effect on visible things.

They beat their drums before the palace; and then a humorous little scene, a reflex of the old Dionysiac comedy—of that laughter which was an essential element of the earliest worship of Dionysus—follows the first chorus. The old blind prophet Teiresias, and the aged king Cadmus, always secretly true to him, have agreed to celebrate the *Thiasus*, and accept the divinity openly. The youthful god has nowhere said decisively that he will have none but young men in his sacred dance. But for that purpose they must put on the long tunic, and that spotted skin which only rustics wear, and assume the *thyrsus* and ivy-crown. Teiresias arrives and is seen knocking at the doors. And then, just as in the medieval mystery, comes the inevitable grotesque, not unwelcome to our poet, who is wont in his plays, perhaps not altogether consciously, to intensify by its relief both the pity and the terror of his conceptions. At the summons of Teiresias, Cadmus appears, already arrayed like him in the appointed ornaments, in all their odd contrast with the infirmity and staidness of old age. Even in old men's veins the spring leaps again, and they are more than ready to begin dancing. But they are shy of the untried dress, and one of them is blind—*ποῖ δεῖ χορεύειν; ποῖ καθιστάναι πόδα; καὶ κρᾶτα σείοαι πολιόν;* and then the difficulty of the way: the long, steep journey to the glens: may pilgrims boil their peas? might they proceed to the place in carriages? At last, while the audience laugh more or less delicately at their aged fumbings, in some co-operative manner, the eyes of the one combining with the hands of the other, the pair are about to set forth.

Here Pentheus is seen approaching the palace in extreme haste. He has been absent from home, and returning, has just heard of the state of things at Thebes—the strange malady of the women, the dancings, the arrival of the mysterious stranger: he finds all the women departed from the town, and sees Cadmus and Teiresias in masque. Like the exaggerated diabolical figures in some of the religious plays and imageries of the Middle Age, he is an impersonation of stupid

impiety, one of those whom the gods willing to destroy first infatuate. Alternating between glib unwisdom and coarse mockery, between violence and a pretence of moral austerity, he understands only the sorriest motives; thinks the whole thing feigned, and fancies the stranger, so effeminate, so attractive of women with whom he remains day and night, but a poor sensual creature, and the real motive of the Bacchic women the indulgence of their lust; his ridiculous old grandfather he is ready to renounce, and accuses Teiresias of having in view only some fresh source of professional profit to himself in connexion with some new-fangled oracle; his petty spite avenges itself on the prophet by an order to root up the sacred chair, where he sits to watch the birds for divination, and disturb the order of his sacred place; and even from the moment of his entrance the mark of his doom seems already set upon him, in an impotent trembling which others notice in him. Those of the women who still loitered, he has already caused to be shut up in the common prison; the others, with Ino, Autonoe, and his own mother, Agave, he will hunt out of the glens; while the stranger is threatened with various cruel forms of death. But Teiresias and Cadmus stay to reason with him, and induce him to abide wisely with them; the prophet fittingly becomes the interpreter of Dionysus, and explains the true nature of the visitor; his divinity, the completion or counterpart of that of Demeter; his gift of prophecy; all the soothing influences he brings with him; above all, his gift of the medicine of sleep to weary mortals. But the reason of Pentheus is already sickening, and the judicial madness gathering over it. Teiresias and Cadmus can but "go pray". So again, not without the laughter of the audience, supporting each other a little grotesquely against a fall, they get away at last.

And then, again, as in those quaintly carved and coloured imageries of the Middle Age—the martyrdom of the youthful Saint Firmin, for instance, round the *Choir* at Amiens—comes the full contrast, with a quite medieval simplicity and directness, between the insolence of the tyrant, now at last in sight of his prey, and the outraged beauty of the youthful god, meek, surrounded by his enemies, like some fair wild creature in the snare of the hunter. Dionysus has been taken prisoner; he is led on to the stage, with his hands bound, but still holding the *thyrsus*. Unresisting he had submitted himself to his captors; his colour had not changed; with a smile he had bidden them do their will, so that even they are touched with awe, and are almost ready to admit his divinity. Marvellously white and red, he stands there; and now, unwilling to be revealed to the unworthy, and requiring a fitness in the receiver, he represents himself, in answer to the inquiries of Pentheus, not as Dionysus, but simply as the god's

prophet, in full trust in whom he desires to hear his sentence. Then the long hair falls to the ground under the shears; the mystic wand is torn from his hand, and he is led away to be tied up, like some dangerous wild animal, in a dark place near the king's stables.

Up to this point in the play, there has been a noticeable ambiguity as to the person of Dionysus, the main figure of the piece; he is in part Dionysus, indeed; but in part, only his messenger, or minister preparing his way; a certain harshness of effect in the actual appearance of a god upon the stage being in this way relieved, or made easy, as by a gradual revelation in two steps. To Pentheus, in his invincible ignorance, his essence remains to the last unrevealed, and even the women of the chorus seem to understand in him, so far, only the forerunner of their real leader. As he goes away bound, therefore, they too, threatened also in their turn with slavery, invoke his greater original to appear and deliver them. In pathetic cries they reproach Thebes for rejecting them—*τί μ' ἀναλίσκει, τί με εὐχεται*—yet they foretell his future greatness; a new Orpheus, he will more than renew that old miraculous reign over animals and plants. Their song is full of suggestions of wood and river. It is as if, for a moment, Dionysus became the suffering vine again; and the rustle of the leaves and water come through their words to refresh it. The fountain of Dirce still haunted by the virgins of Thebes, where the infant god was cooled and washed from the flecks of his fiery birth, becomes typical of the coolness of all springs, and is made, by a really poetic licence, the daughter of the distant Achelous—the earliest born, the father in myth, of all Greek rivers.

A giddy sonorous scene of portents and surprises follows—a distant, exaggerated, dramatic reflex of that old thundering tumult of the festival in the vineyard—in which Dionysus reappears, miraculously set free from his bonds. First, in answer to the deep-toned invocation of the chorus, a great voice is heard from within, proclaiming him to be the son of Semele and Zeus. Then, amid the short, broken, rapturous cries of the women of the chorus, proclaiming him master, the noise of an earthquake passes slowly; the pillars of the palace are seen waving to and fro; while the strange, memorial fire from the tomb of Semele blazes up and envelops the whole building. The terrified women fling themselves on the ground; and then, at last, as the place is shaken open, Dionysus is seen stepping out from among the tottering masses of the mimic palace, bidding them arise and fear not. But just here comes a long pause in the action of the play, in which we must listen to a messenger newly arrived from the glens, to tell us what he has seen there, among the Mænads. The singular, somewhat sinister beauty of this speech, and a similar one

subsequent—a fair description of morning on the mountain-tops, with the Bacchic women sleeping, which turns suddenly to a hard, coarse picture of animals cruelly rent—is one of the special curiosities which distinguish this play; and, as it is wholly narrative, I shall give it in English prose, abbreviating, here and there, some details which seem to have but a metrical value:—

“I was driving my herd of cattle to the summit of the scaur to feed, what time the sun sent forth his earliest beams to warm the earth. And lo! three companies of women, and at the head of one of them Autonoe, thy mother Agave at the head of the second, and Ino at the head of the third. And they all slept, with limbs relaxed, leaned against the low boughs of the pines, or with head thrown heedlessly among the oak-leaves strewn upon the ground—all in the sleep of temperance, not, as thou saidst, pursuing Cypris through the solitudes of the forest, drunken with wine, amid the low rustling of the lotus-pipe.

“And thy mother, when she heard the lowing of the kine, stood up in the midst of them, and cried to them to shake off sleep. And they, casting slumber from their eyes, started upright, a marvel of beauty and order, young and old and maidens yet unmarried. And first, they let fall their hair upon their shoulders; and those whose cinctures were unbound re-composed the spotted fawn-skins, knotting them about with snakes, which rose and licked them on the chin. Some, lately mothers, who with breasts still swelling had left their babes behind, nursed in their arms antelopes, or wild whelps of wolves, and yielded them their milk to drink; and upon their heads they placed crowns of ivy or of oak, or of flowering convolvulus. Then one, taking a thyrsus-wand, struck with it upon a rock, and thereupon leapt out a fine rain of water; another let down a reed upon the earth, and a fount of wine was sent forth there; and those whose thirst was for a white stream, skimming the surface with their finger-tips, gathered from it abundance of milk; and from the ivy of the mystic wands streams of honey distilled. Verily! hadst thou seen these things, thou wouldst have worshipped whom now thou revilest.

“And we shepherds and herdsmen came together to question with each other over this matter—what strange and terrible things they do. And a certain wayfarer from the city, subtle in speech, spake to us—‘O! dwellers upon these solemn ledges of the hills, will ye that we hunt down, and take, amid her revelries, Agave, the mother of Pentheus, according to the king’s pleasure?’ And he seemed to us to speak wisely; and we lay in wait among the bushes; and they, at the time appointed, began moving their wands for the Bacchic dance,

calling with one voice upon Bromius!—Iacchus!—the son of Zeus! and the whole mountain was moved with ecstasy together, and the wild creatures; nothing but was moved in their running. And it chanced that Agave, in her leaping, lighted near me, and I sprang from my hiding-place, willing to lay hold on her; and she groaned out, ‘O! dogs of hunting, these fellows are upon our traces; but follow me! follow! with the mystic wands for weapons in your hands.’ And we, by flight, hardly escaped tearing to pieces at their hands, who thereupon advanced with knifeless fingers upon the young of the kine, as they nipped the green; and then hadst thou seen one holding a bleating calf in her hands, with udder distent, straining it asunder; others tore the heifers to shreds amongst them; tossed up and down the morsels lay in sight—flank or hoof—or hung from the fir-trees, dropping churned blood. The fierce, horned bulls stumbled forward, their breasts upon the ground, dragged on by myriad hands of young women, and in a moment the inner parts were rent to morsels. So, like a flock of birds aloft in flight, they retreat upon the level lands outstretched below, which by the waters of Asopus put forth the fair-flowering crop of Theban people—Hysiaë and Erythræ—below the precipice of Cithæron.”—

A grotesque scene follows, in which the humour we noted, on seeing those two old men diffidently set forth in chaplet and fawn-skin, deepens into a profound tragic irony. Pentheus is determined to go out in arms against the Bacchanals and put them to death, when a sudden desire seizes him to witness them in their encampment upon the mountains. Dionysus, whom he still supposes to be but a prophet or messenger of the god, engages to conduct him thither; and, for greater security among the dangerous women, proposes that he shall disguise himself in female attire. As Pentheus goes within for that purpose, he lingers for a moment behind him, and in prophetic speech declares the approaching end;—the victim has fallen into the net; and he goes in to assist at the toilet, to array him in the ornaments which he will carry to Hades, destroyed by his own mother’s hands. It is characteristic of Euripides—part of his fine tact and subtlety—to relieve and justify what seems tedious, or constrained, or merely terrible and grotesque, by a suddenly suggested trait of homely pathos, or a glimpse of natural beauty, or a morsel of form or colour seemingly taken directly from picture or sculpture. So here, in this fantastic scene our thoughts are changed in a moment by the singing of the chorus, and divert for a while to the dark-haired tresses of the wood; the breath of the riverside is upon us; beside it, a fawn escaped from the hunter’s net is flying swiftly in its joy; like it, the Mænad rushes

along; and we see the little head thrown back upon the neck, in deep aspiration, to drink in the dew.

Meantime, Pentheus has assumed his disguise, and comes forth tricked up with false hair and the dress of a Bacchanal; but still with some misgivings at the thought of going thus attired through the streets of Thebes and with many laughable readjustments of the unwonted articles of clothing. And with the woman's dress, his madness is closing faster round him; just before, in the palace, terrified at the noise of the earthquake, he had drawn sword upon a mere fantastic appearance, and pierced only the empty air. Now he begins to see the sun double, and Thebes with all its towers repeated, while his conductor seems to him transformed into a wild beast; and now and then, we come upon some touches of a curious psychology, so that we might almost seem to be reading a modern poet. As if Euripides had been aware of a not unknown symptom of incipient madness (it is said) in which the patient, losing the sense of resistance, while lifting small objects imagines himself to be raising enormous weights, Pentheus, as he lifts the *thyrsus*, fancies he could lift Cithæron with all the Bacchanals upon it. At all this the laughter of course will pass round the theatre; while those who really pierce into the purpose of the poet, shudder, as they see the victim thus grotesquely clad going to his doom, already foreseen in the ominous chant of the chorus—and as it were his grave-clothes, in the dress which makes him ridiculous.

Presently a messenger arrives to announce that Pentheus is dead, and then another curious narrative sets forth the manner of his death. Full of wild, coarse, revolting details, of course not without pathetic touches, and with the loveliness of the serving Mænads, and of their mountain solitudes—their trees and water—never quite forgotten, it describes how, venturing as a spy too near the sacred circle, Pentheus was fallen upon, like a wild beast, by the mystic huntresses and torn to pieces, his mother being the first to begin "the sacred rites of slaughter."

And at last Agave herself comes upon the stage, holding aloft the head of her son, fixed upon the sharp end of the *thyrsus*, calling upon the women of the chorus to welcome the revel of the Evian god; who, accordingly, admit her into the company, professing themselves her fellow-revellers, the Bacchanals being thus absorbed into the chorus for the rest of the play. For, indeed, all through it, the true, though partly suppressed relation of the chorus to the Bacchanals is this, that the women of the chorus, staid and temperate for the moment, following Dionysus in his alternations, are but the paler sisters of his more wild and gloomy votaries—the true followers of the mystical

Dionysus—the real chorus of Zagreus; the idea that their violent proceedings are the result of madness only, sent on them as a punishment for their original rejection of the god, being, as I said, when seen from the deeper motives of the myth, only a “sophism” of Euripides—a piece of rationalism of which he avails himself for the purpose of softening down the tradition of which he has undertaken to be the poet. Agave comes on the stage, then, blood-stained, exulting in her “victory of tears”, still quite visibly mad indeed, and with the outward signs of madness, and as her mind wanders, musing still on the fancy that the dead head in her hands is that of a lion she has slain among the mountains—a young lion, she avers, as she notices the down on the young man’s chin, and his abundant hair—a fancy in which the chorus humour her, willing to deal gently with the poor distraught creature. Supported by them, she rejoices “exceedingly, exceedingly”, declaring herself “fortunate” in such goodly spoil; priding herself that the victim has been slain, not with iron weapons, but with her own white fingers, she summons all Thebes to come and behold. She calls for her aged father to draw near and see; and for Pentheus himself, at last, that he may mount and rivet her trophy, appropriately decorative there, between the triglyphs of the cornice below the roof, visible to all.

And now, from this point onwards, Dionysus himself becomes more and more clearly discernible as the hunter, a wily hunter, and man the prey he hunts for; “Our king is a hunter,” cry the chorus, as they unite in Agave’s triumph and give their sanction to her deed. And as the Bacchanals supplement the chorus, and must be added to it to make the conception of it complete; so in the conception of Dionysus also a certain transference, or substitution, must be made—much of the horror and sorrow of Agave, of Pentheus, of the whole tragic situation, must be transferred to him, if we wish to realise in the older, profounder, and more complete sense of his nature, that mystical being of Greek tradition to whom all these experiences—his madness, the chase, his imprisonment and death, his peace again—really belong; and to discern which, through Euripides’ peculiar treatment of his subject, is part of the curious interest of this play.

Through the *sophism* of Euripides! For that, again, is the really descriptive word, with which Euripides, a lover of sophisms, as Aristophanes knows, himself supplies us. Well;—this softened version of the Bacchic madness is a sophism of Euripides; and Dionysus *Omophagus*—the eater of raw flesh, must be added to the golden image of Dionysus *Meilichius*—the honey-sweet, if the old tradition in its completeness is to be, in spite of that sophism, our closing impression; if we are to catch, in its fulness, that deep under-current of horror

which runs below, all through this masque of spring, and realise the spectacle of that wild chase, in which Dionysus is ultimately both the hunter and the spoil.

But meantime another person appears on the stage; Cadmus enters, followed by attendants bearing on a bier the torn limbs of Pentheus, which lying wildly scattered through the tangled wood, have been with difficulty collected and now decently put together and covered over. In the little that still remains before the end of the play, destiny now hurrying things rapidly forward, and strong emotions, hopes and forebodings being now closely packed, Euripides has before him an artistic problem of enormous difficulty. Perhaps this very haste and close-packing of the matter, which keeps the mind from dwelling over-much on detail, relieves its real extravagance, and those who read it carefully will think that the pathos of Euripides has been equal to the occasion. In a few profoundly designed touches he depicts the perplexity of Cadmus, in whose house a god had become an inmate, only to destroy it—the regret of the old man for the one male child to whom that house had looked up as the pillar whereby aged people might feel secure; the piteous craziness of Agave; the unconscious irony with which she caresses the florid, youthful head of her son; the delicate breaking of the thing to her reviving intelligence, as Cadmus, though he can but wish that she might live on for ever in her visionary enjoyment, prepares the way, by playing on that other horrible legend of the Theban house, the tearing of Actæon to death—he too destroyed by a god. He gives us the sense of Agave's gradual return to reason through many glimmering doubts, till she wakes up at last to find the real face turned up towards the mother and murderess; the quite naturally spontaneous sorrow of the mother, ending with her confession, down to her last sigh, and the final breaking up of the house of Cadmus; with a result so genuine, heartfelt, and dignified withal in its expression of a strange ineffable woe, that a fragment of it, the lamentation of Agave over her son, in which the long-pent agony at last finds vent, were, it is supposed, adopted into his paler work by an early Christian poet, and have figured since, as touches of real fire, in the *Christus Patiens* of Gregory Nazianzen.

LACEDÆMON

"AMONG the Greeks, philosophy has flourished longest, and is still most abundant, at Crete and Lacedæmon; and there there are more teachers of philosophy than anywhere else in the world. But the Lacedæmonians deny this, and pretend to be unlearned people, lest it should become manifest that it is through philosophy they are supreme in Greece; that they may be thought to owe their supremacy to their fighting and manly spirit, for they think that if the means of their superiority were made known all the Greeks would practise this. But now, by keeping it a secret, they have succeeded in misleading the Laconisers in the various cities of Greece; and in imitation of them these people buffet themselves, and practise gymnastics, and put on boxing-gloves, and wear short cloaks, as if it were by such things that the Lacedæmonians excel all other Greeks. But the Lacedæmonians, when they wish to have intercourse with their philosophers without reserve, and are weary of going to them by stealth, make legal proclamation that those Laconisers should depart, with any other aliens who may be sojourning among them, and thereupon betake themselves to their sophists unobserved by strangers. And you may know that what I say is true, and that the Lacedæmonians are better instructed than all other people in philosophy and the art of discussion in this way. If anyone will converse with even the most insignificant of the Lacedæmonians, he may find him indeed in the greater part of what he says seemingly but a poor creature; but then at some chance point in the conversation he will throw in some brief compact saying, worthy of remark, like a clever archer, so that his interlocutor shall seem no better than a child. Of this fact some both of those now living and of the ancients have been aware, and that to Laconise consists in the study of philosophy far rather than in the pursuit of gymnastic, for they saw that to utter such sayings as those was only possible for a perfectly educated man. Of these was Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias the Prienean, and our own Solon, Cleobulus the Lindian, and Myson of Chen, and the seventh among them was called Chilon, a Lacedæmonian. These were all zealous lovers and disciples of the culture of the Lacedæmonians. And any one may understand that their philosophy was something of this kind, short rememberable sayings uttered by each of them. They met together and offered these in common, as the first-fruits of philosophy, to Apollo in his temple at Delphi, and they wrote

upon the walls these sayings known and read of all men: Γνωθὶ σαυτοῦ and Μηδὲν ἄγαν *Protagoras*, 343.

Of course there is something in that of the romance to which the genius of Plato readily inclined him; something also of the Platonic humour or irony, which suggests, for example, to Meno, so anxious to be instructed in the theory of virtue, that the philosophic temper must be departed from Attica, its natural home, to Thessaly—to the rude northern capital whence that ingenuous youth was freshly arrived. Partly romantic, partly humorous, in his Laconism, Plato is however quite serious in locating a certain spirit at Lacedæmon of which his own ideal Republic would have been the completer development; while the picture he draws of it presents many a detail taken straight from Lacedæmon as it really was, as if by an admiring visitor, who had in person paced the streets of the Dorian metropolis it was so difficult for any alien to enter. What was actually known of that stern place, of the Lacedæmonians at home, at school, had charmed into fancies about it other philosophic theorists; Xenophon for instance, who had little or nothing of romantic tendency about them.

And there was another sort of romancing also, quite opposite to this of Plato, concerning the hard ways among themselves of those Lacedæmonians who were so invincible in the field. "The Lacedæmonians," says Pausanias, "appear to have admired least of all people poetry and the praise which it bestows." "At Lacedæmon there is more philosophy than anywhere else in the world," is what Plato, or the Platonic Socrates, had said. Yet, on the contrary, there were some who alleged that true Lacedæmonians—Lacedæmonian nobles—for their protection against the "effeminacies" of culture, were denied all knowledge of reading and writing. But then we know that written books are properly a mere assistant, sometimes, as Plato himself suggests, a treacherous assistant, to memory; those conservative Lacedæmonians being, so to speak, the people of memory pre-eminently, and very appropriately, for, whether or not they were taught to read and write, they were acknowledged adepts in the Pythagorean philosophy, a philosophy which attributes to memory so preponderating a function in the mental life. "Writing," says K. O. Müller in his laborious, yet, in spite of its air of coldness, passably romantic work on *The Dorians*—an author whose quiet enthusiasm for his subject resulted indeed in a patient scholarship which well befits it: "Writing," he says, "was not essential in a nation where laws, hymns, and the praises of illustrious men—that is, jurisprudence and history—were taught in their schools of music." Music, which is or ought to be, as we know, according to those Pythagorean doc-

trines, itself the essence of all things, was everywhere in the Perfect City of Plato; and among the Lacedæmonians also, who may be thought to have come within measurable distance of that Perfect City, though with no conscious theories about it, music (*μουσική*) in the larger sense of the word, was everywhere, not to alleviate only but actually to promote and inform, to be the very substance of their so strenuous and taxing habit of life. What was this "music", this service or culture of the Muses, this harmony, partly moral, doubtless, but also throughout a matter of elaborate movement of the voice, of musical instruments, of all beside that could in any way be associated to such things—this music, for the maintenance, the perpetual sense of which those vigorous souls were ready to sacrifice so many opportunities, privileges, enjoyments of a different sort, so much of their ease, of themselves, of one another?

Platonism is a highly conscious reassertion of one of the two constituent elements in the Hellenic genius, of the spirit of the highlands namely in which the early Dorian forefathers of the Lacedæmonians had secreted their peculiar disposition, in contrast with the mobile, the marine and fluid temper of the littoral Ionian people. *The Republic* of Plato is an embodiment of that Platonic reassertion or preference, of Platonism, as the principle of a society, ideal enough indeed, yet in various degrees practicable. It is not understood by Plato to be an erection *de novo*, and therefore only on paper. Its foundations might be laid in certain practicable changes to be enforced in the old schools, in a certain reformed music which must be taught there, and would float thence into the existing homes of Greece, under the shadow of its old temples, the sanction of its old religion, its old memories, the old names of things. Given the central idea, with its essentially renovating power, the well-worn elements of society as it is would rebuild themselves, and a new colour come gradually over all things as the proper expression of a certain new mind in them.

And in fact such embodiments of the specially Hellenic element in Hellenism, compacted in the natural course of political development, there had been, though in a less ideal form, in those many Dorian constitutions to which Aristotle refers. To Lacedæmon, in *The Republic* itself, admiring allusions abound, covert, yet bold enough, if we remember the existing rivalry between Athens and her neighbour; and it becomes therefore a help in the study of Plato's political ideal to approach as near as we may to that earlier actual embodiment of its principles, which is also very interesting in itself. The Platonic City of the Perfect would not have been cut clean away from the old roots of national life: would have had many links with the beautiful

and venerable Greek cities of past and present. The ideal, poetic or romantic as it might seem, would but have begun where they had left off, where Lacedæmon, in particular, had left off. Let us then, by way of realising the better the physiognomy of Plato's theoretic building, suppose some contemporary student of *The Republic*, a pupil, say, in the Athenian Academy, determined to gaze on the actual face of what has so strong a family likeness to it. Stimulated by his master's unconcealed Laconism, his approval of contemporary Lacedæmon, he is at the pains to journey thither, and make personal inspection of a place, in Plato's general commendations of which he may suspect some humour or irony, but which has unmistakably lent many a detail to his ideal Republic, on paper, or in thought.

He would have found it, this youthful Anacharsis, hard to get there, partly through the nature of the country, in part because the people of Lacedæmon (it was a point of system with them, as we heard just now) were suspicious of foreigners. Romantic dealers in political theory at Athens were safe in saying pretty much what they pleased about its domestic doings. Still, not so far away, made, not in idea and by the movements of an abstract argument, the mere strokes of a philosophic pen, but solidified by constancy of character, fortified anew on emergency by heroic deeds, for itself, for the whole of Greece, though with such persistent hold throughout on an idea, or system of ideas, that it might seem actually to have come ready-made from the mind of some half-divine Lycurgus, or through him from Apollo himself, creator of that music of which it was an example:—there, in the hidden valley of the Eurotas, it was to be found, as a visible centre of actual human life, the place which was alleged to have come, harsh paradox as it might sound to Athenian ears, within measurable distance of civic perfection, of the political and social ideal.

Our youthful adventurer then, making his way along those difficult roads, between the ridges of the Eastern Arcadian Mountains, and emerging at last into "hollow" Laconia, would have found himself in a country carefully made the most of by the labour of serfs; a land of slavery, far more relentlessly organised according to law than anywhere else in Greece, where, in truth, for the most part slavery was a kind of accident. But whatever rigours these slaves of Laconia were otherwise subjected to, they enjoyed certainly that kind of well-being which does come of organisation, from the order and regularity of system, living under central military authority, and bound themselves to military service; to furnish (as under later feudal institutions) so many efficient men-at-arms on demand, and maintain themselves in readiness for war as they laboured in those distant-

scattered farms, seldom visited by their true masters from Lacedæmon, whither year by year they sent in kind their heavy tribute of oil, barley and wine. The very genius of conservatism here enthroned, secured, we may be sure, to this old-fashioned country life something of the personal dignity, of the enjoyments also, natural to it; somewhat livelier religious feasts, for example, than their lords allowed themselves. Stray echoes of their boisterous plebeian mirth on such occasions have reached us in Greek literature.

But if the traveller had penetrated a little more closely he would have been told certain startling stories, with at least a basis of truth in them, even as regards the age of Plato. These slaves were *Greeks*: no rude Scythians, nor crouching, decrepit Asiatics, like ordinary prisoners of war, the sort of slaves you could buy, but genuine Greeks, speaking their native tongue, if with less of muscular tension and energy, yet probably with pleasanter voice and accent than their essentially high-land masters. Physically they thrived, under something of the same discipline which had made those masters the masters also of all Greece. They saw them now and then—their younger lords, brought, under strict tutelage, on those long hunting expeditions, one of their so rare enjoyments, prescribed for them, as was believed, by the founder of their polity. But sometimes (here was the report which made one shudder even in broad daylight, in those seemingly reposeful places) sometimes those young nobles of Lacedæmon reached them on a different kind of pursuit: came by night, secretly, though by no means contrarily to the laws of a state crafty as it was determined, to murder them at home, or a certain moiety of them; one here or there perhaps who, with good Achæan blood in his veins, and under a wholesome mode of life, was grown too tall, or too handsome, or too fruitful a father, to feel quite like a slave. Under a sort of slavery that makes him strong and beautiful, where personal beauty was so greatly prized, his masters are in fact jealous of him.

But masters thus hard to others, these Lacedæmonians, as we know, were the reverse of indulgent to themselves. While, as matter of theory, power and privilege belonged exclusively to the old, to the seniors (οἱ γέροντες, ἡ γερουσία) ruling by a council wherein no question might be discussed, one might only deliver one's *Aye*! or *No*! Lacedæmon was in truth before all things an organised place of discipline, an organised opportunity also, for youth, for the sort of youth that knew how to command by serving—a constant exhibition of youthful courage, youthful self-respect, yet above all of true youthful docility; youth thus committing itself absolutely soul and body, to a corporate sentiment in its very sports. There was a third

sort of regulation visits the lads of Lacedæmon were driven to pay to those country places, the vales, the uplands, when, to brace youthful stomachs and develop resource, they came at stated intervals as a kind of mendicants or thieves, feet and head uncovered through frost and heat, to steal their sustenance, under penalties if detected—"a survival", as anthropologists would doubtless prove, pointing out collateral illustrations of the same, from a world of purely animal courage and keenness. Whips and rods used in a kind of monitorial system by themselves had a great part in the education of these young aristocrats, and, as pain surely must do, pain not of bodily disease or wretched accidents, but as it were by dignified rules of art, seem to have refined them, to have made them observant of the minutest direction in those musical exercises, wherein eye and ear and voice and foot all alike combined. There could be nothing παραλειπόμενον, as Plato says, no "oversights", here. No! every one, at every moment, quite as his best; and, observe especially, with no superfluities; seeing that when we have to do with music of any kind, with matters of art, in stone, in words, in the actions of life, all superfluities are in very truth "superfluities of naughtiness", such as annihilate music.

The country through which our young traveller from his laxer school of Athens seeks his way to Lacedæmon, this land of a noble slavery, so peacefully occupied but for those irregular nocturnal terrors, was perhaps the loveliest in Greece, with that peculiarly blent loveliness, in which, as at Florence, the expression of a luxurious lowland is duly checked by the severity of its mountain barriers. It was a type of the Dorian purpose in life—sternness, like sea-water infused into wine, overtaking a matter naturally rich, at the moment when fulness may lose its savour and expression. Amid the corn and oleanders—corn "so tall, close, and luxuriant", as the modern traveller there still finds—it was visible at last, Lacedæmon, κοίλη Σπάρτη, "hollow Sparta", under the sheltering walls of Taygetus, the broken and rugged forms of which were attributed to earthquake, but without proper walls of its own. In that natural fastness, or trap, or falcon's nest, it had no need of them, the falcon of the land, with the hamlets (πολίσνια) a hundred and more, dispersed over it, in jealously enforced seclusion from one another.

From the first he notes "the antiquated appearance" of Lacedæmon, by no means a "growing" place, always rebuilding, remodelling itself, after the newest fashion, with shapeless suburbs stretching further and further on every side of it, grown too large perhaps, as Plato threatens, to be a body, a corporate unity, at all: not that, but still, and to the last, itself only a great village, a solemn, ancient, mountain

village. Even here of course there had been movement, some sort of progress, if so it is to be called, linking limb to limb; but long ago. Originally a union, after the manner of early Rome, of perhaps three or four neighbouring villages which had never lost their physiognomy, like Rome it occupied a group of irregular heights, the outermost roots of Taygetus, on the bank of a river or mountain torrent, impetuous enough in winter, a series of wide shallows and deep pools in the blazing summer. It was every day however, all the year round, that Lacedæmonian youth plunged itself in the Eurotas. Hence, from this circumstance of the union there of originally disparate parts, the picturesque and expressive irregularity, had they had time to think it such, of the "city" properly so termed, the one open place or street, High Street, or *Corso*—Aphetais by name, lined, irregularly again, with various religious and other monuments. It radiated on all sides into a mazy coil, an ambush, of narrow crooked lanes, up and down, in which attack and defence would necessarily be a matter of hand-to-hand fighting. In the outskirts lay the citizens' houses, roomier far than those of Athens, with spacious, walled courts, almost in the country. Here, in contrast to the homes of Athens, the legitimate wife had a real dignity, the unmarried woman a singular freedom. There were no door-knockers: you shouted at the outer gate to be let in. Between the high walls lanes passed into country roads, sacred ways to ancient sacro-sanct localities, Therapnæ, Amyclæ, on this side or that, under the shade of mighty plane-trees.

Plato, as you may remember, gives a hint that, like all other visible things, the very trees—how they grow—exercise an æsthetic influence on character. The diligent legislator therefore would have his preferences, even in this matter of the trees under which the citizens of the Perfect City might sit down to rest. What trees? you wonder. The olive? the laurel, as if wrought in grandiose metal? the cypress? that came to a wonderful height in Dorian Crete: the oak? we think it very expressive of strenuous national character. Well! certainly the plane-tree for one, characteristic tree of Lacedæmon then and now; a very tranquil and tranquillising object, spreading its level or gravely curved masses on the air as regally as the tree of Lebanon itself. A vest grove of such was the distinguishing mark of Lacedæmon in any distant view of it; that, and, as at Athens, a colossal image, older than the days of Phidias—the *Demos* of Lacedæmon, it would seem, towering visibly above the people it protected. Below those mighty trees, on an island in their national river, were the "playing-fields", where Lacedæmonian youth after sacrifice in the *Éphebeum* delighted others rather than itself (no "shirking" was allowed) with a sort of football, under rigorous self-imposed rules—tearing, biting

—a sport, rougher even than our own, *et même très dangereux*, as our Attic neighbours, the French, say of the English game.

They were orderly enough perforce, the boys, the young men, within the city—seen, but not heard, except under regulations, when they made the best music in the world. Our visitor from Athens when he saw those youthful soldiers, or military students, as Xenophon in his pretty treatise on the polity of Lacedæmon describes, walking with downcast eyes, their hands meekly hidden in their cloaks, might have thought them young monks, had he known of such.

A little mountain town, however ambitious, however successful in its ambition, would hardly be expected to compete with Athens, or Corinth, itself a Dorian state, in art-production, yet had not only its characteristic preferences in this matter, in plastic and literary art, but had also many venerable and beautiful buildings to show. The Athenian visitor, who is standing now in the central space of Lacedæmon, notes here, as being a trait also of the "Perfect City" of academic theory, that precisely because these people find themselves very susceptible to the influences of form and colour and sound, to external æsthetic influence, but have withal a special purpose, a certain strongly conceived disciplinary or ethic ideal, that therefore a peculiar humour prevails among them, a self-denying humour, in regard to these things. Those ancient Pelopid princes, from whom the hereditary kings of historic Lacedæmon, come back from exile into their old home, claim to be descended, had had their palaces, with a certain Homeric, Asiatic splendour, of wrought metal and the like; considerable relics of which still remained, but as public or sacred property now. At the time when Plato's scholar stands before them, the houses of these later historic kings—two kings, as you remember, always reigning together, in some not quite clearly evolved differentiation of the temporal and spiritual functions—were plain enough; the royal doors, when beggar or courtier approached them, no daintier than Lycurgus had prescribed for all true Lacedæmonian citizens; rude, strange things to look at, fashioned only, like the ceilings within, with axe and saw, of old mountain oak or pine from those great Taygetan forests, whence came also the abundant iron, which this stern people of iron and steel had super-induced on that earlier dreamy age of silver and gold—steel, however, admirably tempered and wrought in its application to military use, and much sought after throughout Greece.

Layer upon layer, the relics of those earlier generations, a whole succession of remarkable races, lay beneath the strenuous footsteps of the present occupants, as there was old poetic legend in the depths

of their seemingly so practical or prosaic souls. Nor beneath their feet only: the relics of their worship, their sanctuaries, their tombs, their very houses, were part of the scenery of actual life. Our young Platonic visitor from Athens, climbing through those narrow winding lanes, and standing at length on the open platform of the Aphetais, finds himself surrounded by treasures, modest treasures, of ancient architecture, dotted irregularly here and there about him, as if with conscious design upon picturesque effect, such irregularities sometimes carrying in them the secret of expression, an accent. Old Alcman for one had been alive to the poetic opportunities of the place; boasts that he belonged to Lacedæmon, "abounding in sacred tripods"; that it was here that the Heliconian Muses had revealed themselves to him. If the private abodes even of royalty were rude it was only that the splendour of places dedicated to religion and the state might the more abound. Most splendid of them all, the *Stoa Pæiké*, a cloister or portico with painted walls, to which the spoils of the Persian war had been devoted, ranged its pillars of white marble on one side of the central space: on the other, connecting those high memories with the task of the living, lay the *Choros*, where, at the *Gymnopædia*, the Spartan youth danced in honour of Apollo.

Scattered up and down among the monuments of victory in battle were the *herai*, tombs or chapels of the heroes who had purchased it with their blood—Pausanias, Leonidas, brought home from Thermopylæ forty years after his death. "A pillar too," says Pausanias, "is erected here, on which the paternal names are inscribed of those who at Thermopylæ sustained the attack of the Medes." Here in truth all deities put on a martial habit—Aphrodite, the Muses, Eros himself, Athene Chalciæcus, Athene of the Brazen House, an antique temple towering above the rest, built from the spoils of some victory long since forgotten. The name of the artist who made the image of the tutelary goddess was remembered in the annals of early Greek art, Gitiades, a native of Lacedæmon. He had composed a hymn also in her praise. Could we have seen the place he had restored rather than constructed, with its covering of mythological reliefs in brass or bronze, perhaps Homer's descriptions of a seemingly impossible sort of metallic architecture would have been less taxing to his reader's imagination. Those who in other places had lost their taste amid the facile splendours of a later day, might here go to school again.

Throughout Greece, in fact, it was the Doric style which came to prevail as the religious or hieratic manner, never to be surpassed for that purpose, as the Gothic style seems likely to do with us. Though it is not exclusively the invention of Dorian men, yet, says Müller, "the Dorian character created the Doric architecture", and he notes

in it, especially, the severity of the perfectly straight, smartly tapering line of its column; the bold projection of the capital; the alternation of long unornamented plain surfaces with narrower bands of decorated work; the profound shadows; the expression of security, of harmony, infused throughout; the magnificent pediment crowning the whole, like the cornice of mountain wall beyond, around, and above it. Standing there in the Aphetais, amid these venerable works of art, the visitor could not forget the natural architecture about him. As the Dorian genius had differentiated itself from the common Hellenic type in the heart of the mountains of Epirus, so here at last, in its final and most characteristic home, it was still surrounded by them:—
 ὁρῶν τε καὶ κοιλáινεται.

We know, some of us, what such mountain neighbourhood means. The wholesome vigour, the clearness and purity they maintain in matters such as air, light, water; how their presence multiplies the contrasts, the element of light and shadow, in things; the untouched perfection of the minuter ornament, flower or crystal, they permit one sparingly; their reproachful aloofness, though so close to us, keeping sensitive minds at least in a sort of moral alliance with their remoter solitudes. "The whole life of the Lacedæmonian community," says Müller, "had a secluded, impenetrable, and secret character." You couldn't really know it unless you were of it.

A system which conceived the whole of life as matter of attention, patience, a fidelity to detail, like that of good soldiers and musicians, could not but tell also on the merest handicrafts, constituting them in the fullest sense a *craft*. If the money of Sparta was, or had recently been, of cumbrous iron, that was because its trade had a sufficient variety of stock to be mainly by barter, and we may suppose the market (into which, like our own academic youth at Oxford, young Spartans were forbidden to go) full enough of business—many a busy workshop in those winding lanes. The lower arts certainly no true Spartan might practise; but even Helots, artisan Helots, would have more than was usual elsewhere of that sharpened intelligence and the disciplined hand in such labour which really dignify those who follow it. In Athens itself certain Lacedæmonian commodities were much in demand, things of military service or for every-day use, turned out with flawless adaptation to their purpose.

The Helots, then, to whom this business exclusively belonged, a race of slaves, distinguishable however from the slaves or serfs who tilled the land, handing on their mastery in those matters in a kind of guild, father to son, through old-established families of flute-players, wine-mixers, bakers, and the like, thus left their hereditary lords, *Les Gens Fleur-de-lisés* (to borrow an expression from French

feudalism) in unbroken leisure, to perfect themselves for the proper functions of gentlemen—σχολή, leisure, in the two senses of the word, which in truth involve one another—their whole time free, to be told out in austerer schools. Long caseful nights, with more than enough to eat and drink, the “illiberal” pleasures of appetite, as Aristotle and Plato agree in thinking them, are of course the appropriate reward or remedy of those who work painfully with their hands, and seem to have been freely conceded to those Helots, who by concession of the State, from first to last their legal owner, were in domestic service, and sometimes much petted in the house, though by no means freely conceded to the “golden youth” of Lacedæmon—youth of gold, or gilded steel. The traditional Helot, drunk perforce to disgust his young master with the coarseness of vice, is probably a fable; and there are other stories full of a touching spirit of natural service, of submissiveness, of an instinctively loyal admiration for the brilliant qualities of one trained perhaps to despise him, by which the servitor must have become, in his measure, actually a sharer in them. Just here, for once, we see that slavish ἥθος, the servile range of sentiment, which ought to accompany the condition of slavery, if it be indeed, as Aristotle supposes, one of the natural relationships between man and man, idealised, or æsthetically right, pleasant and proper; the ἀρετή, or “best possible condition”, of the young servitor as such, including a sort of bodily worship, and a willingness to share the keen discipline which had developed the so attractive gallantry of his youthful lords.

A great wave, successive waves, of invasion, sufficiently remote to have lost already all historic truth of detail, had left them—these Helots, and the Perioeci, in the country round about—thus to serve among their own kinsmen, though so close to them in lineage, so much on a level with their masters in essential physical qualities that to the last they could never be entirely subdued in spirit. Patient modern research, following the track of a deep-rooted national tradition veiled in the mythological figments which centre in what is called “The Return of the Heraclidæ”, reveals those northern immigrants or invaders, at various points on their way, dominant all along it, from a certain deep vale in the heart of the mountains of Epirus southwards, gradually through zone after zone of more temperate lowland, to reach their perfection, highlanders from first to last, in this mountain “hollow” of Lacedæmon. They claim supremacy, not as Dorian invaders, but as kinsmen of the Achæan princes of the land; yet it was to the fact of conquest, to the necessity of maintaining a position so strained, like that, as Aristotle expressly pointed out,

of a beleaguered encampment in an enemy's territory, that the singular institutions of Lacedæmon, the half-military, half-monastic spirit, which prevailed in this so gravely beautiful place, had been originally due. But observe:—Its moral and political system, in which that slavery was so significant a factor, its discipline, its æsthetic and other scruples, its peculiar moral ἥθος, having long before our Platonic student comes thither attained its original and proper ends, survived,—there is the point: survived as an end in itself, as a matter of sentiment, of public and perhaps still more of personal pride, though of the finer, the very finest sort, in one word as an *ideal*. Pericles, as you remember, in his famous vindication of the Athenian system, makes his hearers understand that the ends of the Lacedæmonian people might have been attained with less self-sacrifice than theirs. But still, there it remained, ἡ δαίτυα Δωρικὴ—the genuine Laconism of of the Lacedæmonians themselves, their traditional conception of life, with its earnestness, its precision and strength, its loyalty to its own type, its impassioned completeness; a spectacle, æsthetically, at least, very interesting, like some perfect instrument shaping to what they visibly were, the most beautiful of all people, in Greece, in the world.

Gymnastic, “bodily exercise”, of course, does not always and necessarily effect the like of that. A certain perfectly preserved old Roman mosaic pavement in the Lateran Museum, presents a terribly fresh picture of the results of another sort of “training”, the monstrous development by a cruel art, by exercise, of this or that muscle, changing boy or man into a merely mechanic instrument with which his breeders might make money by amusing the Roman people. Victor Hugo's odious dream of *L'homme qui rit*, must have had something of a prototype among those old Roman gladiators. The Lacedæmonians, says Xenophon on the other hand, ὁμοίως ἀπὸ τε τῶν σκελῶν καὶ ἀπὸ χειρῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τραχήλου γυμνάζονται. Here too, that is to say, they aimed at, they found, proportion, Pythagorean symmetry or music, and bold as they could be in their exercises (it was a Lacedæmonian who, at Olympia, for the first time threw aside the heavy girdle and ran naked to the goal) forbade all that was likely to disfigure the body. Though we must not suppose all ties of nature rent asunder, nor all connexion between parents and children in those genial, retired houses at an end in very early life, it was yet a strictly public education which began with them betimes, and with a very clearly defined programme, conservative of ancient traditional and unwritten rules, an aristocratic education for the few, the *liberales*—“liberals”, as we may say, in that the proper sense of the word. It made them, in very deed, the lords, the masters, of those they were meant by-and-by to rule; masters, of their very souls, of

their imagination, enforcing on them an ideal, by a sort of spiritual authority, thus backing, or backed by, a very effective organisation of "the power of the sword". In speaking of Lacedæmon, you see, it comes naturally to speak out of proportion, it might seem, of its youth and of the education of its youth. But in fact if you enter into the spirit of Lacedæmonian youth, you may conceive Lacedæmonian manhood for yourselves. You divine already what the boy, the youth, so late in obtaining his majority, in becoming a man, came to be in the action of life, and on the battle-field. "In a Doric state," says Müller, "education was, on the whole, a matter of more importance than government."

A young Lacedæmonian, then, of the privileged class left his home, his tender nurses in those large, quiet old suburban houses early, for a public school, a schooling all the stricter as years went on, to be followed, even so, by a peculiar sort of barrack-life, the temper of which, a sort of military monasticism (it must be repeated) would beset him to the end. Though in the gymnasia of Lacedæmon no idle bystanders, no—well! Platonic loungers after truth or what not—were permitted, yet we are told, neither there nor in Sparta generally, neither there nor anywhere else, were the boys permitted to be alone. If a certain love of reserve, of seclusion, characterised the Spartan citizen as such, it was perhaps the cicatrice of that wrench from a soft home into the imperative, inevitable gaze of his fellows, broad, searching, minute, his regret for, his desire to regain, moral and mental even more than physical ease. And his education continued late; he could seldom think of marriage till the age of thirty. Ethically it aimed at the reality, æsthetically at the expression, of reserved power, and from the first set its subject on the thought of his personal dignity, of self-command, in the artistic way of a good musician, a good soldier. It is noted that "the general character of the Doric dialect has itself the character not of question or entreaty, but of command or dictation." The place of deference, of obedience, was large in the education of Lacedæmonian youth; and they never complained. It involved however for the most part, as with ourselves, the government of youth by itself; an implicit subordination of the younger to the older, in many degrees. Quite early in life, at school, they found that superiors and inferiors, *ἄμωιοι* and *ὑπομέλονες*, there really were; and their education proceeded with systematic boldness on that fact. *Ἐβρην*, *μελλέβρην*, *σιδεύνης*, and the like—words, titles, which indicate an unflinching elaboration of the attitudes of youthful subordination and command with responsibility—remain as a part of what we might call their "public-school slang". They ate together "in their divisions" (*ἀγέλαι*) on much the same fare every day at a sort of messes; not

reclined, like Ionians or Asiatics, but like heroes, the princely males, in Homer, sitting upright on their wooden benches: were "inspected" frequently, and by free use of *viva voce* examination "became adepts in presence of mind", in mental readiness and vigour, in the brief mode of speech Plato commends, which took and has kept its name from them; with no warm baths allowed; a daily plunge in their river required. Yes! The beauty of these most beautiful of all people was a male beauty, far remote from feminine tenderness; had the expression of a certain *ascēsis* in it; was like un-sweetened wine. In comparison with it, beauty of another type might seem to be wanting in edge or accent.

And they could be silent. Of the positive uses of the negation of speech, like genuine scholars of Pythagoras, the Lacedæmonians were well aware, gaining strength and intensity by repression. Long spaces of enforced silence had doubtless something to do with that expressive brevity of utterance, which could be also, when they cared, so inexpressive of what their intentions really were—something to do with the habit of mind to which such speaking would come naturally. In contrast with the ceaseless prattle of Athens, Lacedæmonian assemblies lasted as short a time as possible, all standing. A Lacedæmonian ambassador being asked in whose name he was come, replies: "In the name of the State, if I succeed; if I fail, in my own." What they lost in extension they gained in depth.

Had our traveller been tempted to ask a young Lacedæmonian to return his visit at Athens, permission would have been refused him. He belonged to a community bent above all things on keeping indelibly its own proper colour. Its more strictly mental education centred, in fact, upon a faithful training of the memory, again in the spirit of Pythagoras, in regard to what seemed best worth remembering. Hard and practical as Lacedæmonians might seem, they lived nevertheless very much by imagination; and to train the memory, to preoccupy their minds with the past, as in our own classic or historic culture of youth, was in reality to develop a vigorous imagination. In music (*μουσική*) as they conceived it, there would be no strictly selfish reading, writing or listening; and if there was little a Lacedæmonian lad had to read or write at all, he had much to learn, like a true conservative, by heart: those unwritten laws of which the Council of Elders was the authorised depository, and on which the whole public procedure of the state depended; the archaic forms of religious worship; the names of their kings, of victors in their games or in battle; the brief record of great events; the oracles they had received the *rhetrai*, from Lycurgus downwards, composed in metrical Lacedæmonian Greek; their history and law, in short, actually set to music

by Terpander and others, as was said. What the Lacedæmonian learned by heart he was for the most part to sing, and we catch a glimpse, an echo, of their boys in school chanting; one of the things in old Greece one would have liked best to see and hear—youthful beauty and strength in perfect service—a manifestation of the true and genuine Hellenism, though it may make one think of the novices at school in some Gothic cloister, of our own old English schools, nay, of the young Lacedæmonian's cousins at Sion, singing there the law and its praises.

The Platonic student of the ways of the Lacedæmonians observes then, is interested in observing, that their education, which indeed makes no sharp distinction between mental and bodily exercise, results as it had begun in "music"—ends with body, mind, memory above all, at their finest, on great show-days, in the dance. Austere, self-denying Lacedæmon had in fact one of the largest theatres in Greece, in part scooped out boldly on the hill-side, built partly of enormous blocks of stone, the foundations of which may still be seen. We read what Plato says in *The Republic* of "imitations", of the imitative arts, imitation reaching of course its largest development on the stage, and are perhaps surprised at the importance he assigns, in every department of human culture, to a matter of that kind. But here as elsewhere to see was to understand. We should have understood Plato's drift in his long criticism and defence of imitative art, his careful system of rules concerning it, could we have seen the famous dramatic Lacedæmonian dancing. They danced a theme, a subject. A complex and elaborate art this must necessarily have been, but, as we may gather, as concise, direct, economically expressive, in all its varied sound and motion, as those swift, lightly girt, *impromptu* Lacedæmonian sayings. With no movement of voice or hand or foot, παραλειπόμενον, unconsidered, as Plato forbids, it was the perfect flower of their correction, of that minute patience and care which ends in a perfect expressiveness; not a note, a glance, a touch, but told obediently in the promotion of a firmly grasped mental conception, as in that perfect poetry or sculpture or painting, in which "the finger of the master is on every part of his work." We have nothing really like it, and to comprehend it must remember that, though it took place in part at least on the stage of a theatre—was in fact a ballet-dance, it had also the character both of a liturgical service and of a military inspection; and yet, in spite of its severity of rule, was a natural expression of the delight of all who took part in it.

So perfect a spectacle the gods themselves might be thought pleased to witness; were in consequence presented with it as an important

element in the religious worship of the Lacedæmonians, in whose life religion had even a larger part than with the other Greeks, conspicuously religious, *δεισιδαίμονες*, involved in religion or superstition, as the Greeks generally were. More closely even than their so scrupulous neighbours they associated the state, its acts and officers, with a religious sanction, religious usages, theories, traditions. While the responsibilities of secular government lay upon the Ephors, those mysteriously dual, at first sight useless, and yet so sanctimoniously observed kings, "of the house of Hercules", with something of the splendour of the old Achæan or Homeric kings, in life as also in death, the splendid funerals, the passionate archaic laments which then followed them, were in fact of spiritual or priestly rank, the living and active centre of a poetic religious system, binding them "in a beneficent connexion" to the past, and in the present with special closeness to the oracle of Delphi.

Of that catholic or general centre of Greek religion the Lacedæmonians were the hereditary and privileged guardians, as also the peculiar people of Apollo, the god of Delphi; but, observel of Apollo in a peculiar development of his deity. In the dramatic business of Lacedæmon, centering in these almost liturgical dances, there was little comic acting. The fondness of the slaves for buffoonery and loud laughter, was to their master, who had no taste for the like, a reassuring note of his superiority. He therefore indulged them in it on occasion, and you might fancy that the religion of a people so strenuous, ever so full of their dignity, must have been a religion of gloom. It was otherwise. The Lacedæmonians, like those monastic persons of whom they so often remind one, as a matter of fact however surprising, were a very cheerful people; and the religion of which they had so much, deeply imbued everywhere with an optimism as of hopeful youth, encouraged that disposition, was above all a religion of sanity. The observant Platonic visitor might have taken note that something of that purgation of religious thought and sentiment, of its expression in literature, recommended in Plato's *Republic*, had been already quietly effected here, towards the establishment of a kind of cheerful daylight in men's tempers.

In furtherance then of such a religion of sanity, of that harmony of functions, which is the Aristotelian definition of health, Apollo, sanest of the national gods, became also the tribal or home god of Lacedæmon. That common Greek worship of Apollo they made especially their own, but (just here is the noticeable point) with a marked preference for the human element in him, for the mental powers of his being over those elemental or physical forces of production, which he also mystically represents, and which resulted

sometimes in an orgiastic, an unintellectual, even an immoral service. He remains youthful and unmarried. In congruity with this, it is observed that, in a quasi-Roman worship, abstract qualities and relationships, ideals, become subsidiary objects of religious consideration around him, such as sleep, death, fear, fortune, laughter even. Nay, other gods also are, so to speak, Apollinised, adapted to the Apolline presence; Aphrodite armed, Enyalios in fetters, perhaps that he may never depart thence. Amateurs everywhere of the virile element in life, the Lacedæmonians, in truth, impart to all things an intellectual character. Adding a vigorous logic to seemingly animal instincts, for them courage itself becomes, as for the strictly philosophic mind at Athens, with Plato and Aristotle, an intellectual condition, a form of right knowledge.

Such assertion of the consciously human interest in a religion based originally on a preoccupation with the unconscious forces of nature, was exemplified in the great religious festival of Lacedæmon. As a spectator of the *Hyacinthia*, our Platonic student would have found himself one of a large body of strangers, gathered together from Lacedæmon and its dependent towns and villages, within the ancient precincts of Amyclæ, at the season between spring and summer when under the first fierce heat of the year the abundant hyacinths fade from the fields. Blue flowers, you remember, are the rarest, to many eyes the loveliest: and the Lacedæmonians with their guests were met together to celebrate the death of the hapless lad who had lent his name to them, Hyacinthus, son of Apollo, or son of an ancient mortal king who had reigned in this very place; in either case, greatly beloved of the god, who had slain him by sad accident as they played at quoits together delightfully, to his immense sorrow. That Boreas (the north-wind) had maliciously miscarried the discus, is a circumstance we hardly need to remind us that we have here, of course, only one of many transparent, unmistakable, parables or symbols of the great solar change, so sudden in the south, like the story of Proserpine, Adonis, and the like. But here, more completely perhaps than in any other of those stories, the primary elemental sense had obscured itself behind its really tragic analogue in human life, behind the figure of the dying youth. We know little of the details of the feast; incidentally, that Apollo was vested on the occasion in a purple robe, brought in ceremony from Lacedæmon, woven there, Pausanias tells us, in a certain house called from that circumstance *Chiton*. You may remember how sparing these Lacedæmonians were of such dyed raiment, of any but the natural and virgin colouring of the fleece; that purple or red, however, was the colour of their royal funerals, as indeed Amyclæ itself was famous for purple stuffs—Amyclææ vestes. As the general

order of the feast, we discern clearly a single day of somewhat shrill gaiety, between two days of significant mourning after the manner of All Souls' Day, directed from mimic grief for a mythic object, to a really sorrowful commemoration by the whole Lacedæmonian people—each separate family for its own deceased members.

It was so again with those other youthful demi-gods, the Dioscuri, themselves also, in old heroic time, resident in this venerable place: *Amyclæi fratres*, fraternal leaders of the Lacedæmonian people. Their statues at this date were numerous in Laconia, or the *docana*, primitive symbols of them, those two upright beams of wood, carried to battle before the two kings, until it happened that through their secret enmity a certain battle was lost, after which one king only proceeded to the field, and one part only of that token of fraternity, the other remaining at Sparta. Well! they were two stars, you know, at their original birth in men's minds, *Gemini*, virginal fresh stars of dawn, rising and setting alternately—those two half-earthly half-celestial brothers. One of them, Polydeuces, was immortal. The other, Castor, the younger, subject to old age and death, had fallen in battle, was found breathing his last. Polydeuces thereupon, at his own prayer, was permitted to die: with undying fraternal affection, had foregone one moiety of his privilege, and lay in the grave for a day in his brother's stead, but shone out again on the morrow; the brothers thus ever coming and going, interchangeably, but both alike gifted now with immortal youth.

In their origin, then, very obviously elemental deities, they were thus become almost wholly humanised, fraternised with the Lacedæmonian people, their closest friends of the whole celestial company, visitors, as fond legend told, at their very hearths, found warming themselves in the half-light at their rude fire-sides. Themselves thus visible on occasion, at all times in devout art, they were the starry patrons of all that youth was proud of, delighted in, horsemanship, games, battle; and always with that profound fraternal sentiment. Brothers, comrades, who could not live without each other, they were the most fitting patrons of a place in which friendship, comradeship like theirs, came to so much. Lovers of youth they remained, those enstarred types of it, arrested thus at that moment of miraculous good fortune as a consecration of the clean, youthful friendship, "passing even the love of woman", which, by system, and under the sanction of their founder's name, elaborated into a kind of art, became an elementary part of education. A part of their duty and discipline, it was also their great solace and encouragement. The beloved and the lover, side by side through their long days of eager labour, and above all on the battlefield, became respectively, ἀττης, the hearer,

and εἰσπνήλας, the inspirer: the elder inspiring the younger with his own strength and noble taste in things.

What, it has been asked, what was there to occupy persons of the privileged class in Lacedæmon from morning to night, thus cut off as they were from politics and business, and many of the common interests of men's lives? Our Platonic visitor would have asked rather, Why this strenuous task-work, day after day; why this loyalty to a system, so costly to you individually, though it may be thought to have survived its original purpose; this laborious, endless, education, which does not propose to give you anything very useful or enjoyable in itself? An intelligent young Spartan might have replied: "To the end that I myself may be a perfect work of art, issuing thus into the eyes of all Greece." He might have observed—we may safely observe for him—that the institutions of his country, whose he was, had a beauty in themselves, as we may observe also of some at least of our own institutions, educational or religious: that they bring out, for instance, the lights and shadows of human character, and relieve the present by maintaining in it an ideal sense of the past. He might have added that he had his friendships to solace him; and to encourage him, the sense of honour.

Honour, friendship, loyalty to the ideal of the past, himself as a work of art! There was much of course in his answer. Yet still, after all, to understand, to be capable of, such motives, was itself but a result of that exacting discipline of character we are trying to account for; and the question still recurs, *To what purpose?* Why, with no prospect of Israel's reward, are you as scrupulous, minute, self-taxing, as he? A tincture of asceticism in the Lacedæmonian rule may remind us again of the monasticism of the Middle Ages. But then, monastic severity was for the purging of a troubled conscience, or for the hope of an immense prize, neither of which conditions is to be supposed here. In fact the surprise of Saint Paul, as a practical man, at the slightness of the reward for which a Greek spent himself, natural as it is about all pagan perfection, is especially applicable about these Lacedæmonians, who indeed had actually invented that so "corruptible" and essentially worthless parsley crown in place of the more tangible prizes of an earlier age. Strange people! Where, precisely, may be the spring of action in you, who are so severe to yourselves; you who, in the words of Plato's supposed objector that the rulers of the ideal state are not to be envied, have nothing you can really call your own, but are like hired servants in your own houses,—*qui manducatis panem doloris?*

Another day-dream, you may say, about those obscure ancient

people, it was ever so difficult really to know, who had hidden their actual life with so much success; but certainly a quite natural dream upon the paradoxical things we are told of them, on good authority. It is because they make us ask that question; puzzle us by a paradoxical idealism in life; are thus distinguished from their neighbours; that, like some of our old English places of education, though we might not care to live always at school there, it is good to visit them on occasion; as some philosophic Athenians, as we have now seen, loved to do, at least in thought.

CONCLUSION

POSTSCRIPT TO "APPRECIATIONS"

POSTSCRIPT

αἶνει δὲ παλαιὸν μὲν οἶνον, ἄνθεα δ' ὕμνων νεωτέρων

THE words, *classical* and *romantic*, although, like many other critical expressions, sometimes abused by those who have understood them too vaguely or too absolutely, yet define two real tendencies in the history of art and literature. Used in an exaggerated sense, to express a greater opposition between those tendencies than really exists, they have at times tended to divide people of taste into opposite camps. But in that *House Beautiful*, which the creative minds of all generations—the artists and those who have treated life in the spirit of art—are always building together, for the refreshment of the human spirit, these oppositions cease; and the *Interpreter* of the *House Beautiful*, the true æsthetic critic, uses these divisions, only so far as they enable him to enter into the peculiarities of the objects with which he has to do. The term *classical*, fixed, as it is, to a well-defined literature, and a well-defined group in art, is clear, indeed; but when it has often been used in a hard, and merely scholastic sense, by the praisers of what is old and accustomed, at the expense of what is new, by critics who would never have discovered for themselves the charm of any work, whether new or old, who value what is old, in art or literature, for its accessories, and chiefly for the conventional authority that has gathered about it—people who would never really have been made glad by any Venus fresh-risen from the sea, and who praise the Venus of old Greece and Rome, only because they fancy her grown now into something staid and tame.

And as the term, *classical*, has been used in a too absolute, and therefore in a misleading sense, so the term, *romantic*, has been used much too vaguely, in various accidental senses. The sense in which Scott is called a romantic writer is chiefly this; that, in opposition to the literary tradition of the last century, he loved strange adventure, and sought it in the Middle Age. Much later, in a Yorkshire village, the spirit of romanticism bore a more really characteristic fruit in the work of a young girl, Emily Brontë, the romance of *Wuthering Heights*; the figures of Hareton Earnshaw, of Catherine Linton, and of Heathcliff—tearing open Catherine's grave, removing one side of her coffin, that he may really lie beside her in death—figures so passionate, yet woven on a background of delicately beautiful, moor-

land scenery, being typical examples of that spirit. In Germany, again, that spirit is shown less in Tieck, its professional representative, than in Meinhold, the author of *Sidonia the Sorceress* and the *Amber-Witch*. In Germany and France, within the last hundred years, the term has been used to describe a particular school of writers; and, consequently, when Heine criticises the *Romantic School* in Germany—that movement which culminated in Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*; or when Théophile Gautier criticises the romantic movement in France, where, indeed, it bore its most characteristic fruits, and its play is hardly yet over where, by a certain audacity, or *bizarrierie* of motive, united with faultless literary execution, it still shows itself in imaginative literature, they use the word, with an exact sense of special artistic qualities, indeed; but use it, nevertheless, with a limited application to the manifestation of those qualities at a particular period. But the romantic spirit is, in reality, an ever-present, an enduring principle, in the artistic temperament; and the qualities of thought and style which that, and other similar uses of the word *romantic* really indicate, are indeed but symptoms of a very continuous and widely working influence.

Though the words *classical* and *romantic*, then, have acquired an almost technical meaning, in application to certain developments of German and French taste, yet this is but one variation of an old opposition, which may be traced from the very beginning of the formation of European art and literature. From the first formation of anything like a standard of taste in these things, the restless curiosity of their more eager lovers necessarily made itself felt, in the craving for new motives, new subjects of interest, new modifications of style. Hence, the opposition between the classicists and the romanticists—between the adherents, in the culture of beauty, of the principles of liberty, and authority, respectively—of strength, and order or what the Greeks called *κοσμιότης*.

Sainte-Beuve, in the third volume of the *Causeries du Lundi*, has discussed the question, *What is meant by a classic?* It was a question he was well fitted to answer, having himself lived through many phases of taste, and having been in earlier life an enthusiastic member of the romantic school: he was also a great master of that sort of "philosophy of literature", which delights in tracing traditions in it, and the way in which various phases of thought and sentiment maintain themselves, through successive modifications, from epoch to epoch. His aim, then, is to give the word *classic* a wider and, as he says, a more generous sense than it commonly bears, to make it expressly *grandiose et flottant*: and, in doing this, he develops, in a masterly manner, those qualities of measure, purity, temperance, of

which it is the especial function of classical art and literature, whatever meaning, narrower or wider, we attach to the term, to take care.

The charm, therefore, of what is classical, in art or literature, is that of the well-known tale, to which we can, nevertheless, listen over and over again, because it is told so well. To the absolute beauty of its artistic form, is added the accidental, tranquil, charm of familiarity. There are times, indeed, at which these charms fail to work on our spirits at all, because they fail to excite us. "*Romanticism*," says Stendhal, "is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the actual state of their habits and beliefs, are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure; *classicism*, on the contrary, of presenting them with that which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their grandfathers." But then, beneath all changes of habits and beliefs, our love of that mere abstract proportion—of music—which what is classical in literature possesses, still maintains itself in the best of us, and what pleased our grandparents may at least tranquillise us. The "classic" comes to us out of the cool and quiet of other times, as the measure of what a long experience has shown will at least never displease us. And in the classical literature of Greece and Rome, as in the classics of the last century, the essentially classical element is that quality of order in beauty, which they possess, indeed, in a pre-eminent degree, and which impresses some minds to the exclusion of everything else in them.

It is the addition of strangeness to beauty, that constitutes the romantic character in art; and the desire of beauty being a fixed element in every artistic organisation, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty, that constitutes the romantic temper. Curiosity and the desire of beauty, have each their place in art, as in all true criticism. When one's curiosity is deficient, when one is not eager enough for new impressions, and new pleasures, one is liable to value mere academical proprieties too highly, to be satisfied with worn-out or conventional types, with the insipid ornament of Racine, or the prettiness of that later Greek sculpture, which passed so long for true Hellenic work; to miss those places where the handiwork of nature, or of the artist, has been most cunning; to find the most stimulating products of art a mere irritation. And when one's curiosity is in excess, when it overbalances the desire of beauty then one is liable to value in works of art what is inartistic in them; to be satisfied with what is exaggerated in art, with productions like some of those of the romantic school in Germany; not to distinguish, jealously enough, between what is admirably done, and what is done not quite so well, in the writings, for instance, of Jean Paul. And if I had to give instances of these defects, then I should say, that Pope; in common

with the age of literature to which he belonged, had too little curiosity, so that there is always a certain insipidity in the effect of his work, exquisite as it is; and, coming down to our own time, that Balzac had an excess of curiosity—curiosity not duly tempered with the desire of beauty.

But, however falsely those two tendencies may be opposed by critics, or exaggerated by artists themselves, they are tendencies really at work at all times in art, moulding it, with the balance sometimes a little on one side, sometimes a little on the other, generating, respectively, as the balance inclines on this side or that, two principles, two traditions, in art, and in literature so far as it partakes of the spirit of art. If there is a great overbalance of curiosity, then, we have the grotesque in art: if the union of strangeness and beauty, under very difficult and complex conditions, be a successful one, if the union be entire, then the resultant beauty is very exquisite, very attractive. With a passionate care for beauty, the romantic spirit refuses to have it unless the condition of strangeness be first fulfilled. Its desire is for a beauty born of unlikely elements, by a profound alchemy, by a difficult initiation, by the charm which wrings it even out of terrible things; and a trace of distortion, of the grotesque, may perhaps linger, as an additional element of expression, about its ultimate grace. Its eager, excited spirit will have strength, the grotesque, first of all—the trees shrieking as you tear off the leaves; for Jean Valjean, the long years of convict life; for Redgauntlet, the quicksands of Solway Moss; then, incorporate with this strangeness, and intensified by restraint, as much sweetness, as much beauty, as is compatible with that. *Energique, frais, et dispos*—these, according to Sainte-Beuve, are the characteristics of a genuine classic—*les ouvrages anciens ne sont pas classiques parce qu'ils sont vieux, mais parce qu'ils sont énergiques, frais, et dispos*. Energy, freshness, intelligent and masterly disposition:—these are characteristics of Victor Hugo when his alchemy is complete, in certain figures, like Marius and Cosette in certain scenes, like that in the opening of *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, where Déruchette writes the name of *Gilliatt* in the snow, on Christmas morning; but always there is a certain note of strangeness discernible there, as well.

The essential elements, then, of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty; and it is only as an illustration of these qualities, that it seeks the Middle Age, because, in the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Age, there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty, to be won, by strong imagination, out of things unlikely or remote.

Few, probably, now read Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, though it has its interest, the interest which never quite fades out of work

really touched with the enthusiasm of the spiritual adventurer, the pioneer in culture. It was published in 1810, to introduce to French readers a new school of writers—the romantic school, from beyond the Rhine; and it was followed, twenty-three years later, by Heine's *Romantische Schule*, as at once a supplement and a correction. Both these books, then, connect romanticism with Germany, with the names especially of Goethe and Tieck; and, to many English readers, the idea of romanticism is still inseparably connected with Germany—that Germany which, in its quaint old towns, under the spire of Strasburg or the towers of Heidelberg, was always listening in rapt inaction to the melodious, fascinating voices of the Middle Age, and which, now that it has got Strasburg back again, has, I suppose, almost ceased to exist. But neither Germany, with its Goethe and Tieck, nor England, with its Byron and Scott, is nearly so representative of the romantic temper as France, with Murger, and Gautier, and Victor Hugo. It is in French literature that its most characteristic expression is to be found; and that, as most closely derivative, historically, from such peculiar conditions, as ever reinforce it to the utmost.

For, although temperament has much to do with the generation of the romantic spirit, and although this spirit, with its curiosity, its thirst for a curious beauty, may be always traceable in excellent art (traceable even in Sophocles) yet still, in a limited sense, it may be said to be a product of special epochs. Outbreaks of this spirit, that is, come naturally with particular periods—times, when, in men's approaches towards art and poetry, curiosity may be noticed to take the lead, when men come to art and poetry, with a deep thirst for intellectual excitement, after a long *ennui*, or in reaction against the strain of outward, practical things: in the later Middle Age, for instance; so that medieval poetry, centering in Dante, is often opposed to Greek and Roman poetry, as romantic poetry to the classical. What the romanticism of Dante is, may be estimated, if we compare the lines in which Virgil describes the hazel-wood, from whose broken twigs flows the blood of Polydorus, not without the expression of a real shudder at the ghastly incident, with the whole canto of the *Inferno*, into which Dante has expanded them, beautifying and softening it, meanwhile, by a sentiment of profound pity. And it is especially in that period of intellectual disturbance, immediately preceding Dante, amid which the romance languages define themselves at last, that this temper is manifested. Here, in the literature of Provence, the very name of *romanticism* is stamped with its true signification: here we have indeed a romantic world, grotesque even, in the strength of its passions, almost insane in its curious expression of them, drawing all

things into its sphere, making the birds, nay! lifeless things, its voices and messengers, yet so penetrated with the desire for beauty and sweetness, that it begets a wholly new species of poetry, in which the *Renaissance* may be said to begin. The last century was pre-eminently a classical age, an age in which, for art and literature, the element of a comely order was in the ascendant; which, passing away, left a hard battle to be fought between the classical and the romantic schools. Yet, it is in the heart of this century, of Goldsmith and Stothard, of Watteau, and the *Siècle de Louis XIV.*—in one of its central, if not most characteristic figures, in Rousseau—that the modern or French romanticism really originates. But, what in the eighteenth century is but an exceptional phenomenon, breaking through its fair reserve and discretion only at rare intervals, is the habitual guise of the nineteenth, breaking through it perpetually, with a feverishness, an incomprehensible straining and excitement, which all experience to some degree, but yearning also, in the genuine children of the romantic school, to be *énergique, frais, et dispos*—for those qualities of energy, freshness, comely order; and often, in Murger, in Gautier, in Victor Hugo, for instance, with singular felicity attaining them.

It is in the terrible tragedy of Rousseau, in fact, that French romanticism, with much else, begins: reading his *Confessions* we seem actually to assist at the birth of this new, strong spirit in the French mind. The wildness which has shocked so many, and the fascination which has influenced almost every one, in the squalid, yet eloquent figure, we see and hear so clearly in that book, wandering under the apple-blossoms and among the vines of Neuchâtel or Vevey actually give it the quality of a very successful romantic invention. His strangeness or distortion, his profound subjectivity, his passionateness—the *cor laceratum*—Rousseau makes all men in love with these. *Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai sus. Mais si je ne vauz pas mieux, au moins je suis autre.*—"I am not made like any one else I have ever known: yet, if I am not better, at least I am different." These words, from the first page of the *Confessions*, anticipate all the Werthers, Renés, Obermanns, of the last hundred years. For Rousseau did but anticipate a trouble in the spirit of the whole world; and thirty years afterwards, what in him was a peculiarity, became part of the general consciousness. A storm was coming: Rousseau, with others, felt it in the air, and they helped to bring it down: they introduced a disturbing element into French literature, then so trim and formal, like our own literature of the age of Queen Anne.

In 1815 the storm had come and gone, but had left, in the spirit of "young France", the *ennui* of an immense disillusion. In the last chapter of Edgar Quinet's *Révolution Française*, a work itself full of

irony, of disillusion, he distinguishes two books, Senancour's *Obermann* and Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, as characteristic of the first decade of the present century. In those two books we detect already the disease and the cure—in *Obermann* the irony, refined into a plaintive philosophy of "indifference"—in Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, the refuge from a tarnished actual present, a present of disillusion, into a world of strength and beauty in the Middle Age, as at an earlier period—in *René* and *Atala*—into the free play of them in savage life. It is to minds in this spiritual situation, weary of the present, but yearning for the spectacle of beauty and strength, that the works of French romanticism appeal. They set a positive value on the intense, the exceptional; and a certain distortion is sometimes noticeable in them, as in conceptions like Victor Hugo's *Quasimodo*, or *Gwynplaine*, something of a terrible grotesque, of the *macabre*, as the French themselves call it; though always combined with perfect literary execution, as in Gautier's *La Morte Amoureuse*, or the scene of the "maimed" burial-rites of the player, dead of the frost, in his *Capitaine Fracasse*—true "flowers of the yew". It becomes grim humour in Victor Hugo's combat of Gilliatt with the devil-fish, or the incident, with all its ghastly comedy drawn out at length, of the great gun detached from its fastenings on shipboard, in *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* (perhaps the most terrible of all the accidents that can happen by sea) and in the entire episode, in that book, of the *Convention*. Not less surely does it reach a genuine pathos; for the habit of noting and distinguishing one's own most intimate passages of sentiment makes one sympathetic, begetting, as it must, the power of entering, by all sorts of finer ways, into the intimate recesses of other minds; so that pity is another quality of romanticism, both Victor Hugo and Gautier being great lovers of animals, and charming writers about them, and Murger being unrivalled in the pathos of his *Scènes de la Vie de Jeunesse*. Penetrating so finely into all situations which appeal to pity, above all, into the special or exceptional phases of such feeling, the romantic humour is not afraid of the quaintness or singularity of its circumstances or expression, pity, indeed, being of the essence of humour; so that Victor Hugo does but turn his romanticism into practice, in his hunger and thirst after practical *Justice!*—a justice which shall no longer wrong children, or animals, for instance, by ignoring in a stupid, mere breadth of view, minute facts about them. Yet the romanticists are antinomian, too, sometimes, because the love of energy and beauty, of distinction in passion, tended naturally to become a little *bizarre*, plunging into the Middle Age, into the secrets of old Italian story. *Are we in the Inferno?*—we are tempted to ask, wondering at something malign in so much beauty. For over all a care for the

refreshment of the human spirit by fine art manifests itself, a predominant sense of literary charm, so that, in their search for the secret of exquisite expression, the romantic school went back to the forgotten world of early French poetry, and literature itself became the most delicate of the arts—like “goldsmith’s work”, says Sainte-Beuve, of Bertrand’s *Gaspard de la Nuit*—and that peculiarly French gift, the gift of exquisite speech, *argute loqui*, attained in them a perfection which it had never seen before.

Stendhal, a writer whom I have already quoted, and of whom English readers might well know much more than they do, stands between the earlier and later growths of the romantic spirit. His novels are rich in romantic quality; and his other writings—partly criticism, partly personal reminiscences—are a very curious and interesting illustration of the needs out of which romanticism arose. In his book on *Racine and Shakespeare*, Stendhal argues that all good art was romantic in its day; and this is perhaps true in Stendhal’s sense. That little treatise, full of “dry light” and fertile ideas, was published in the year 1823, and its object is to defend an entire independence and liberty in the choice and treatment of subject, both in art and literature, against those who upheld the exclusive authority of precedent. In pleading the cause of romanticism, therefore, it is the novelty, both of form and of motive, in writings like the *Herbani* of Victor Hugo (which soon followed it, raising a storm of criticism) that he is chiefly concerned to justify. To be interesting and really stimulating, to keep us from yawning even, art and literature must follow the subtle movements of that nimbly-shifting *Time-Spirit*, or *Zeit-Geist*, understood by French not less than by German criticism, which is always modifying men’s taste, as it modifies their manners and their pleasures. This, he contends, is what all great workmen had always understood. Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, had exercised an absolute independence in their choice of subject and treatment. To turn always with that ever-changing spirit, yet to retain the flavour of what was admirably done in past generations, in the classics, as we say—is the problem of true romanticism. “Dante,” he observes, “was pre-eminently the romantic poet. He adored Virgil, yet he wrote the *Divine Comedy*, with the episode of Ugolino, which is as unlike the *Æneid* as can possibly be. And those who thus obey the fundamental principle of romanticism, one by one become classical, and are joined to that ever-increasing common league, formed by men of all countries, to approach nearer and nearer to perfection.”

Romanticism, then, although it has its epochs, is in its essential characteristics rather a spirit which shows itself at all times, in various degrees, in individual workmen and their work, and the amount of

which criticism has to estimate in them taken one by one, then the peculiarity of a time or a school. Depending on the varying proportion of curiosity and the desire of beauty, natural tendencies of the artistic spirit at all times, it must always be partly a matter of individual temperament. The eighteenth century in England has been regarded as almost exclusively a classical period; yet William Blake, a type of so much which breaks through what are conventionally thought the influences of that century, is still a noticeable phenomenon in it, and the reaction in favour of naturalism in poetry begins in that century, early. There are, thus, the born romanticists and the born classicists. There are the born classicists who start with *form*, to whose minds the comeliness of the old, immemorial, well-recognised types in art and literature, have revealed themselves impressively; who will entertain no matter which will not go easily and flexibly into them; whose work aspires only to be a variation upon, or study from, the older masters. "'Tis art's decline, my son!" they are always saying, to the progressive element in their own generation; to those who care for that which in fifty years' time every one will be caring for. On the other hand, there are the born romanticists, who start with an original, untried *matter*, still in fusion; who conceive this vividly, and hold by it as the essence of their work; who, by the very vividness and heat of their conception, purge away, sooner or later, all that is not organically appropriate to it, till the whole effect adjusts itself in clear, orderly, proportionate form; which form, after a very little time, becomes classical in its turn.

The romantic or classical character of a picture, a poem, a literary work, depends, then, on the balance of certain qualities in it; and in this sense, a very real distinction may be drawn between good classical and good romantic work. But all critical terms are relative; and there is at least a valuable suggestion in that theory of Stendhal's, that all good art was romantic in its day. In the beauties of Homer and Pheidias, quiet as they now seem, there must have been, for those who confronted them for the first time, excitement and surprise, the sudden, unforeseen satisfaction of the desire of beauty. Yet the *Odyssey*, with its marvellous adventure, is more romantic than the *Iliad*, which nevertheless contains, among many other romantic episodes, that of the immortal horses of Achilles, who weep at the death of Patroclus. Æschylus is more romantic than Sophocles, whose *Philoctetes*, were it written now, might figure, for the strangeness of its motive and the perfectness of its execution, as typically romantic; while, of Euripides, it may be said, that his method in writing his plays is to sacrifice readily almost everything else, so that he may attain the fulness of a single romantic effect. These two tendencies, indeed, might be applied

as a measure or standard, all through Greek and Roman art and poetry, with very illuminating results; and for an analyst of the romantic principle in art, no exercise would be more profitable, than to walk through the collection of classical antiquities at the Louvre, or their British Museum, or to examine some representative collection of Greek coins, and note how the element of curiosity, of the love of strangeness, insinuates itself into classical design, and record the effects of the romantic spirit there, the traces of struggle, of the grotesque even, though overbalanced here by sweetness; as in the sculpture of Chartres and Rheims, the real sweetness of mind in the sculptor is often overbalanced by the grotesque, by the rudeness of his strength.

Classicism, then, means for Stendhal, for that younger enthusiastic band of French writers whose unconscious method he formulated into principles the reign of what is pedantic, conventional, and narrowly academical in art; for him, all good art is romantic. To Sainte-Beuve, who understands the term in a more liberal sense, it is the characteristic of certain epochs, of certain spirits in every epoch, not given to the exercise of original imagination, but rather to their working out of refinements of manner on some authorised matter, and who bring to their perfection, in this way, the elements of sanity, of order and beauty in manner. In general criticism, again, it means the spirit of Greece and Rome, of some phases in literature and art that may seem of equal authority with Greece and Rome, the age of Louis the Fourteenth, the age of Johnson; though this is at best an uncritical use of the term, because in Greek and Roman work there are typical examples of the romantic spirit. But explain the terms as we may, in application to particular epochs, there are these two elements always recognisable; united in perfect art—in Sophocles, in Dante, in the highest work of Goethe, though not always absolutely balanced there; and these two elements may be not inappropriately termed the classical and romantic tendencies.

Material for the artist, motives of inspiration, are not yet exhausted; our curious, complex, aspiring age still abounds in subjects for æsthetic manipulation by the literary as well as by other forms of art. For the literary art, at all events, the problem just now is, to induce order upon the contorted, proportionless accumulation of our knowledge and experience, our science and history, our hopes and disillusion, and, in effecting this, to do consciously what has been done hitherto for the most part too unconsciously, to write our English language as the Latins wrote theirs, as the French write, as scholars should write. Appealing, as he may, to precedent in this matter, the scholar will still remember that if "the style is the man" it is also the

